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The Phuket Gazette

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Phi Phi: big talks are a big letdown

By Sangkhae Leelanaporn

KOH PHI PHI DON: Some 200 local people attended a meeting on January 21 with Deputy Prime Minister Suwat Liptapanlop and a passel of senior government officials.

They were hoping for solutions to many tsunami-related problems, especially an end to the ban on building permanent structures, but came away shaking their heads in disappointment at the continuing lack of progress.

Phankam Kitithorakul, Chairman of the Ao Nang Tambon Administration Organization (*OrBorTor*), the local authority responsible for the Phi Phi Islands, told the *Gazette* that he was unhappy with the result of the meeting.

It was the same as all the previous meetings held to discuss Phi Phi's future, he said – a lot of talk but no decisions.

"I expect that the next meeting [scheduled for Jan 27], which will be chaired by the Governor of Krabi, will also result in no progress," K. Phankam added.

The January 21 meeting was scheduled to begin at 9:30 am, but did not start until DPM Suwat's helicopter touched down just before 11 am.

The Deputy PM ordered



Get those boats off the beach: Deputy PM Suwat Liptapanlop wants paradise to be more orderly.

the Director-General of the Marine Department, Tawanrat Onsira, to speed up the rebuilding of the pier at Phi Phi but heard that, despite the passage of a year, the department had yet to receive satisfactory bids for the 200-million-baht project.

Nonetheless, he took the opportunity to admonish local longtail boatmen, saying, "After

the new pier is finished, boatmen here must do things in a much more orderly and safe way – such as picking up tourists and delivering them at the pier.

"We must turn back Phi Phi back into a paradise for tourists, so there must be no more mooring of boats along the beach, as there is now," he said.

DPM Suwat also ordered

the Organization for Specific Areas Administration for Sustainable Tourism Promotion (OSAASTP) to speed up construction of evacuation routes on Koh Phi Phi Don, saying that when this job was complete, "everything can start".

He appeared to step back from the original government

Continued on page 2

Mystery surrounds mass dog poisonings in Patong

PATONG: Residents here are insisting that "up to 100 local dogs" have been poisoned in the middle of the night by people driving around in a Patong Municipality garbage truck.

But Patong Deputy Mayor Chairat Sukbal vehemently denies the alleged cull has anything to do with the municipality.

Prasert Moonlad, a resident of Nanai Rd in Patong, told the *Gazette*, "My three dogs died on Nanai Rd. I saw a yellow municipal truck come by and they loaded the dogs onto the truck at around 4 or 5 am. I also saw other dogs dead by the roadside in early January."

A volunteer who helps feed stray dogs in Patong said, "Recently, some of [the dogs I feed] were poisoned on Soi Nam Sia. Several people saw the Tessabaan doing this. I have also been informed by friends that this has happened in many other places in Patong as well."

Continued on page 2

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DPM Suwat: building ban was 'because of evacuation routes'.

Big talk on Phi Phi, but little action

From page 1

announcement that no rebuilding would be allowed, ever, on the low-lying land between Ton Sai Bay and Loh Dalam Bay.

"We banned construction," he explained, "because we were worried that if we announced that people could start rebuilding, they might [block] areas through which we plan to have evacuation routes."

The OSAASTP Director, Dr Salawud Chiayowan, said that it would take another six months of planning before work could begin on the evacuation routes.

On hearing this, the crowd booed.

CHEERS

But when DPM Suwat insisted that planning be completed within a month, they cheered.

DPM Suwat waved off further questions, saying, "I will leave the problem of permanent housing for tsunami victims, the evacuation route, and water and electricity supply to the next meeting with the Governor of Krabi on January 27."

He then checked out the existing pier before heading back to his helicopter.

Governor urges action to make sure there is enough water

PHUKET CITY: Phuket Governor Udomsak Usarangkura has urged the Phuket Irrigation Office (PIO) and the Phuket Waterworks Office (PWO) to ensure there is enough mains water to meet demand this year, when an expected five million tourists are expected to push dry-season supplies to the limit.

Speaking at the monthly "Governor Meets the Press" conference, he said he expects 15 million tourists to visit Thailand this year, about a third of them coming to Phuket.

"We certainly face shortages and need to find ways to supply as much water as possible," he said, adding that hotels had shortages last year despite the sharp downturn in tourist arrivals.

PIO Water Distribution Chief Suwin Anukul told the media that on January 10 the Cabinet approved a 66-million-baht budget to pipe water from the Hitlor and Manik tin mine lagoons in Tambon Srisoonthorn, Thalang. These lagoons have a combined capacity of 2 million cubic meters. The new pipeline, which should be ready in June, will run south 17 kilometers and supplement a tin mine in Kathu on land under the control of the Phuket Excise Office.

Summarizing the situation at Bang Wad Reservoir in Kathu, K. Suwin said supply there is now 5.2 million m³, down slightly from 5.5 million m³ at the end of 2005. Total rainfall at the dam in 2005

was 2,012 millimeters, about 85% of the normal yearly average of 2,375mm.

To make supplies last as long as possible, the PIO plans to pump about 1 million m³ per month for the first five months of 2006, with the PWO receiving about 60% of the water and Phuket City Water Supply Department the remainder.

PWO demand is approximately 46,000m³/day, about 20,000m³/day of which is met by pumping from Bang Wad Reservoir. Additional year-round sources include Loch Palm Golf Course (8,000m³/day) and two pumping stations on Klong Bang Yai that have a combined sustained yield of 18,000m³/day.

Phuket City Water Supply Department uses 26,000m³/day on average.

Bang Wad Reservoir will supply half of this until – according to projections – supplies run out at the end of May. The remaining demand will be met by pumping from seven tin mines, which currently hold 1.5 million m³, enough to last for 115 days, until the end of April, K. Suwin reported.

In the medium term, work on two new reservoirs, the 7.2-million-m³ Bang Niew Dum Reservoir in Thalang and the 5.7-million-m³ Klong Krata Reservoir in Chalong, will be completed in 2008 and 2009 respectively, he added.

– Anongnat Sartpisut

TWO MISSING YACHTS ARE FOUND

PHUKET: Two yachts recently feared stolen have been found.

First, the 12.5-meter yacht, *Wado Ryu*, which disappeared from its Koh Racha anchorage on January 13, was found nearly a week later, on January 19, drifting about 50 kilometers south of Phuket.

The yacht had been spotted by another vessel that was on its way to the Red Sea.

The French crew of that yacht radioed the *Wado Ryu*'s position to the Phuket-based Mobile Maritime Network, which passed the good news to the crew.

Then, on Friday, January 20, the missing catamaran *Kilo* was recovered in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, some 720km from Phuket.

The 46-footer had disappeared from its mooring off Kata Beach on December 18.

Chris Sieber, the yacht's owner, told the *Gazette* that he had received a call from Rick Reynolds of the water sports equipment company Cobra, in Chalong.

"Rick said he had received a fax from a friend in Port Blair saying that *Kilo* was found in the Nicobar Islands. Apparently it

was found by the Indian Coast Guard."

Mr Sieber said that he had yet to confirm the yacht's condition as he had not been able to get in touch with the authorities in Port Blair.

However, he added, "A friend in Malaysia told me that the boat will be towed from Nicobar to Port Blair."

Mr Sieber said that, depending on the boat's condition, he was looking forward to defending his Multihull Cruising Class title in the Royal Langkawi International Regatta next month.

– Chris Husted

Former Yacht Haven manager and neighbor found dead in Thalang

THALANG: Arun Sukbunpan, 43, a former manager of the Yacht Haven marina, was found dead on January 18, having apparently killed himself with a shotgun.

K. Arun's 78-year-old land-

lady and close neighbor, Wouba Saharak, died upon learning of the suicide.

The exact cause of her death has not yet been determined.

Pol Capt Seksan Kamsakorn told the *Gazette* that K. Arun had killed himself using a double-barreled shotgun that was found close to his body.

Seven shotgun shells were found in a bag nearby.

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Spate of burglaries in Cherng Talay area

By Stephen Fein & Anongnat Sartpisut

CHERNG TALAY: Police are warning foreign residents with expensive homes to take greater security measures following a wave of burglaries that has seen some homes broken into as many as five times.

Cherng Talay Police Deputy Superintendent Pol Lt Col Suwat Kaewphrom told the *Gazette* that there had been continuing reports of burglaries, but that the incidence of the break-ins was not unusually high.

However, some homes had been targeted on multiple occasions, and most of these belong to foreigners, he said.

"It is part of Western culture that people don't like to build high walls or fences around their properties," he said, adding that the construction of expensive but poorly secured homes close to low-income public housing has created a situation ripe for thievery.

The burglars study the movements of police patrols

making their rounds and are therefore able to avoid detection by the police, he added.

"Some homes have been burgled many times. This is because they are in quiet areas and are easy to break into. We tell the home-owners they can't rely solely on the police, and [we] advise them to install security systems such as alarms and closed-circuit TV cameras," he said.

"We can't catch every thief, nor can we assign all of our officers exclusively to areas where the break-ins are occurring because we have to police the entire area."

Local residents have become exasperated and fearful at the increasingly brazen tactics of the thief or thieves, who come into their bedrooms at night while they are sleeping and rummage through bedroom drawers looking for cash and other valuables small enough to carry off.

One couple living in a detached home near Laguna told the *Gazette* that their home was first burgled last June, with 10,000 baht and a mobile phone being stolen.

They were burgled again in early December, the thieves making off with the equivalent of 100,000 baht in foreign currency.

There have been three more break-ins since then. "One night they walked right into the house at 11 pm. My girlfriend woke up and they ran off. Then they returned later the same night and stole 100 baht from right inside the bedroom while we were asleep," the owner said.

An American couple who have lived in the area for five years told the *Gazette* that their home was broken into once. The thieves came in through an open window in the early hours of Christmas morning and stole a laptop computer and three teddy bears belonging to the couple's children.

"That confused us. They weren't even new teddy bears," said the wife. "It's very disturbing, especially the idea that someone's been in the same room with you... this person is very light-footed. They are either unbelievably desperate or unbelievably bold," she said.

Island moves toward the CCTV age

PHUKET CITY: Phuket is moving forward with a plan to boost security by placing closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in key spots around the island.

At a meeting chaired by Vice-Governor Niran Kalayanamit at Phuket Provincial Hall on January 20, Provincial Police Deputy Commander Pol Col Phuwadon Vudduccanok presented a draft document detailing the technical requirements of the system.

The first areas on the island to be put under surveillance, at a cost of 36 million baht, would be Patong, the Tah Chat Chai checkpoint in Thalang, and Provincial Hall in Phuket City.

Initial funding for the project will come from the CEO Governor's 337-million-baht discretionary budget for provincial development.

Another meeting will be held on February 6 to begin the process of hiring a contractor to carry out the project.

Gas stations fined

PHUKET CITY (*Kom Chad Luek*): Following complaints, two gas stations have been fined 5,000 baht apiece by the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) for overcharging by tampering with fuel pumps, or using pumps that were not operating to standard.

The first is the one at 33 Wichit Songkhram Rd, owned by Pattana Petroleum and Gas Co and the other is at 89 Thepkasattri Rd, owned by Sor Thai Rung Pattana Petroleum Co.

Investors sought for Saphan Hin plan

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: The Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) has called on private investors to join it in developing 80 rai of land at Saphan Hin into a new commercial complex, to be called Saphan Hin Park.

OrBorJor President Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr told the *Gazette* that the *OrBorJor* owns the land at Saphan Hin stretching from the triangle at the Phuket Vocational School to the tin-mining monument.

She said that the project will be split into five zones. The main body of investment will be in Zone 1, from the traffic lights on the Phuket City side to the boxing stadium.

This zone will include the defunct Lucky Shopping Complex and will feature an IT center, a One-Tambon, One-Product (OTOP) shop, a careers center, a tourist information center and an exercise area and garden. The Lucky Complex is slated to become a duty-free center.

"Food vendors will be moved to a new 54-unit *OrBorJor*-owned location," she said. "They will need to invest 700,000 to 800,000 baht each, but we will contact the Government Savings Bank to help them secure loans."

The boxing stadium will be demolished, with the proposed OTOP center taking its place. A new stadium is planned for next to the Saphan Hin swimming pool.

"We will start this project this year and we believe that we can, with the help of private investors, finish it quickly."

"Any private investors who are interested should contact the *OrBorJor*," K. Anchalee said. She declined to give a figure for the total investment likely to be required.

K. Anchalee was asked about an deal in September 2004 signed by the *OrBorJor* and Phamonkij Witsavakram (PW), a company based in Nonthaburi, to turn the Lucky Complex into a duty-free shopping center.

The company still has the right to do this, she said, but so far has not done so because, since the tsunami, it has not been able to come up with the capital.



Anchalee Vanich-Thepabutr: 'We believe we can finish this project quickly.'

She added that if PW could not come up with the capital before a certain deadline, which she declined to reveal, then there are other companies that have indicated interest in taking over the project.

Air traffic dropped sharply in 2005

PHUKET: Reflecting the sharp downturn in tourism following the tsunami, international passenger traffic through Phuket International Airport fell 54.4% in 2005.

The latest statistics from Phuket International Airport show that the number of international passengers using the airport, for both arriving and departing flights, dropped from 2,024,879 in 2004 to 923,440 last year.

Domestic passenger traffic through the airport fell 20.5%, from 2,826,022 people in 2004 to 2,246,562 last year.

The number of international

flights dropped 37.3%, from 15,917 in 2004 to 9,975 in 2005. The number of domestic flights fell 15.7%, from 16,765 in 2004 to 14,132 in 2005.

International cargo movement through the airport fell 56.1%, from 14,659 tonnes in 2004 to 6,436 tonnes in 2005. Domestic cargo decreased by 8.1%.

Wat Chalong Fair dates set

PHUKET: This year's Chalong Temple Fair will take place from January 28 to February 3.

The event will feature much Thai cultural entertainment, including a *nang taleung* shadow puppet show, folk music plays and classical Thai music.

Highlights will include shows by top Thai singers including Yingyong Yodbuangam, Catta-

reeya Marasri, Mangpor Chonthicha and Pamela Bouwdent.

In addition, the Phuket branch of the Thai Red Cross Society will organize a number of fun games and a prize drawing, the first prize being a Toyota car.

The fair will be open all day, closing at 1:30 am. For more information call Opas Chobdee at Tel: 06-9533199.

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Smooth operators: cashing in on medical tourism

It may have been only a matter of time before entrepreneurs discovered yet another way to sell the benefits of staying in paradise, the latest of which is tapping the burgeoning trans-national medical tourism market.

Peter Davison, Manager International Services at Phuket International Hospital (PIH), may have put it best when he told the *Gazette*, "Thailand is providing an alternative and responding to market needs. Where else in the world is there a place like Phuket where people can receive plastic surgery, have their teeth whitened and a new crown or set of dentures fitted, get a full medical checkup and then lie on the beach to recuperate and have a holiday in a tropical paradise before returning home a new person?"

PROJECTIONS

While the government tries to iron out funding problems facing its new 30-baht universal healthcare system, it is keen to pull in any additional revenue it can – and tourism is always the first industry it turns to.

So keen is the government on the idea that the Tourism Authority of Thailand has a section devoted to medical tourism on its website.

According to some heady projections, some 1.5 million foreign patients will visit Thailand this year – an increase of 400,000 over 2004.

Mr Davison explained, "More than 30% of our patients are foreigners, including residents, tourists and medical tourists. I would estimate that the [annual] income from all hospitals in Phuket within this market is in excess of 250 million baht.

Phuket's medical facilities have discovered a new market: medical tourism. Commercial prospects look good, and the hospitals on the island and the government are actively promoting the concept to attract a new breed of tourist. However, the quality of medical services here – and what happens to patients after they return home – have come under criticism in the Australian press. Here the *Gazette's* Natcha Yuttaworawit and Suwakon Rakmanee talk to some key figures in the medical tourism industry to see if they think these accusations are justified.

"Medical tourism is growing rapidly, so rapidly that we are expanding our hospital facilities to accommodate increased demand."

He said that PIH actively promotes its facilities and services both in Thailand and abroad.

"We are currently in negotiations with Australia, Sweden and other countries to develop this market."

"It cannot be denied that Thailand does offer world-class hospital services, at prices people are willing to pay," he said.

The medical boom is very much a demand-driven phenomenon, he explained.

"Medical tourism is not solely driven by the Thai government and hospitals alone – dissatisfied customers in their home countries who have to deal with long waiting lists and expensive services are also driving the boom in this market."

Through its aggressive marketing and various promotional campaigns, Bangkok Hospital Phuket (BHP) has also been positioning itself to cater more and more to the medical tourism market.

It recently launched a campaign calling itself a "hospital" and has even opened its own "medical spa".

As testament to the BHP board of directors' high expect-



"Medical tourism is growing rapidly, so rapidly that we are expanding our hospital facilities to accommodate increased demand."

Peter Davison, Manager International Services at Phuket International Hospital.

ations for medical tourism, a separate section of the hospital's website, called "Phuket Health & Travel", has been developed specifically to cater to medical tour-

ism, even co-ordinating what it calls "travel packages".

Dr Witon Wisuthseriwong, of BHP's plastic and reconstructive surgery department, told the *Gazette*, "From February 2003 to November 2005, more than 300 foreigners came for treatment here, including breast augmentation, having wrinkles removed, and nose and chin cosmetic surgery."

"Most of our patients in this market are Thai, but the number of foreigners is increasing."

In addition to the major hospitals, numerous clinics offering upscale medical and dental services have sprung up across the island over the past few years, including two Lasik corrective eye-treatment centers.

Andrea and John May of Packwood, from Washington State in the US, are currently in Phuket on their first visit to Thailand, which was booked so that Andrea could undergo knee replacement surgery at Phuket International Hospital, and then recuperate at the Rungrawee Mansion Hotel in Phuket City.

Mrs May explained to the *Gazette* that she decided to undergo knee surgery in Thailand because the cost in the US was prohibitive.

"The US cost for this surgery is approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000, and the hospital cost for three to five days is approximately \$50,000 per day," she said.

"Since we're vacationing in Thailand, I decided to diligently search for a hospital that had the availability of computer-assisted surgery that would map my knee

for 'perfect alignment and a perfect cut'. This surgery is minimally invasive, allowing me my regular gait after a few short weeks – so say the orthopedic doctors here and abroad."

Speaking to the *Gazette* on January 23, one day after her knee replacement surgery, Mrs May explained that in the US her operation would have cost a total of about US\$150,000, but in Phuket, "We're looking at probably about US\$9,000."

Savings aside, Mrs May explained that she is highly impressed with the quality of care she has received – even if it's still too early to assess the long-term prospects for her knee, which was damaged in an ice skating mishap.

"The quality of care we've had here has been super..."

'WONDERFUL'

"We've met so many people here who are willing to go beyond the pale to help us... It has actually been quite wonderful. It makes your heart feel good."

She told the *Gazette* she would be more than happy to return if she needed to have anything else done and would recommend Phuket International Hospital to others back home.

"I would recommend it wholeheartedly – without a doubt," she said.

However, medical tourism came under fire in Australia late last year, with Thailand getting a special mention. National Australian daily newspaper the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a report raising concerns about the rising trend of Australians coming to Thailand specifically for medical treatment.

Dr Rosanna Capolingua, treasurer of the Australian Medical Association, was reported as saying, "You have to be very wary. It's such a minefield of potential risk with regard to expertise, the quality of surgery and the risk of complications."

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To be a plastic surgeon in Thailand requires a long training program, says Dr Witoon Wisuthseriwong, of the Bangkok Hospital Phuket.

Dr Norm Olbourne, a former president of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons, was quoted as saying that he had seen horrifying side effects from medical tourism, including a woman who lost most of her hair after a brow lift and another who had an infection which left her breast implants clearly protruding.

"A patient flies to Thailand, gets an infection on the plane on the way home, and who fixes it? It's done under Medicare [the Australian government medical care system]," Dr Olbourne said. "You end up with the Australian taxpayer subsidizing Thai surgeons."

Dr Witoon Wisuthseriwong, of the plastic and reconstructive section at Bangkok Hospital Phuket, was surprised by the report. "I have never heard this news before," he said.

He dismissed the claim that surgery performed by Thai surgeons carried more risk than operations performed by their Western counterparts.

"To be a certified plastic

surgeon in Thailand requires a long training program: six years in medical school, a one-year internship, three years in general surgery and three more years in plastic and reconstructive surgery training at a center approved by the Medical Council of Thailand, before having to pass the examination to become a certified plastic surgeon," he said.

"Complications can happen with any surgical procedure," he added. "As specialists, we can foresee the common complications, and inform patients of any potential complications and what should be done if they arise. Before a patient is discharged from hospital, vital signs must be stable and other conditions must be safe enough."

Dr Arthi Kruawit, President of the Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons of Thailand, explained, "Australians come to Thailand for medical treatment more than [from] any other country because it's nearer, though patients from America, Europe, Middle East and Asia



Andrea May (left), with her husband John and Darawan Surakul Sangprasit, owner of the Rungrawee Hotel in Phuket City, where Ms May will stay while she recovers from knee replacement surgery.

also come to Thailand for treatment, such as surgery to have wrinkles removed, liposuction and minor corrective surgery."

No medical procedure is without risks, he noted: "Problems can happen anywhere, and it's not necessarily always the doctor's fault. Some patients have problems requiring long-term treatment, and the patients came to Thailand because the treatment is cheaper than in their home countries. They like how Thai doctors are kind and sincere with their patients. So the patients decide to come here and take a short holiday in Thailand – but then do not continue treatment when they return to their home countries and have problems."

Mr Davison at Phuket International Hospital agreed. "All operations have an element of risk, and complications can occur. However, at Phuket International Hospital complaints and complications are extremely rare," he said.

"By far, the majority of our patients are extremely pleased

with the results, with many of them returning for other types of surgery. A significant majority also return to their home countries, tell their friends how pleased they are, and we find that their friends then become our patients."

Mr Davison defended the quality of medical expertise available in Thailand. "The standard of medical and surgical care in Thailand is very high, with various specialists considered world leaders in their fields. Thailand also has some world-class hospitals, with many doctors being trained in Western countries."

"The claims made in the *Sydney Morning Herald* article may be isolated cases, but do not reflect the hundreds of thousands of patients who are extremely satisfied with the services they have received in Thailand."

Mr Davison, himself an Australian doctor who has practiced in his home country, said, "Here at Phuket International Hospital, we find that the extremely long waiting lists for elec-

tive surgery in Australia attract Australians to Thailand for immediate treatment.



"For example, we have cases where patients may require a hip replacement, are in pain, and their quality of life is restricted because they cannot walk around normally.

"They are then placed on a waiting list, which can be years long, or they can go to an Australian private hospital and have the surgery done at a prohibitive cost.

"Thailand offers an alternative, immediate surgery, significant cost savings, in some cases at half the price – and importantly, the patient regains [his or her] quality of life.

"Being an Australian who has worked in the Australian hospital system, I feel the article is not a true representation of the situation here in Thailand. If I required surgery, I think I would prefer to have it done here, as I have more confidence in the health-care service here than I do in Australia."

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Queer News

Like father, like son

KARON: Police arrested a ladyboy thief as he was busily involved in fellatio on a young Swede who turned out to be the teenage son of a man he had robbed just a few days before.

On the afternoon of January 11, Chalong Police arrested Udomsak Kaewboonma, 20, in a hotel room in Karon. The ladyboy, a resident of Rassada, was arrested in connection with a tourist theft complaint.

The victim in that case, a 53-year-old European, told police he had been hailed by Udomsak, sexily attired as a female, at Karon Beach at about 4 am on January 9.

The youthful impersonator offered to have sex with the man, identified as "Tommy", for 500 baht. When Tommy agreed, they repaired to the strand. Although the south end of Karon beach is notoriously plagued by noisy homosexual prostitutes soliciting johns, Chalong Police have never seriously tried to halt the trade, which is illegal in Thailand.

Apparently, as Tommy was momentarily distracted by Udomsak's oral exercises on the beach, the latter's fingers were slithering about in his pockets. The ladyboy craftily stole Tommy's wallet containing 5,200 baht in cash, USD\$100, 500 Danish Kroner and a gold necklace. Also in the wallet were important personal identification and other documents, the victim told police.

"He then 'showed his love' for the man and when the pair

finished their business, disappeared," a report of the incident read.

But Tommy soon discovered the theft and went at once to the police, who noted his story in their log "for further investigation".

They were spurred into action, however, when Tommy called them again two days later: "The katoey who robbed me is in room 4110 of the Friend's House Hotel having sex with my son!" he reportedly told officers. "Please hurry over and arrest him!"

Police responded to the call and arrived in time to find Udomsak "with the young man's member in his mouth". Officers immediately placed the surprised suspect in custody.

A gold necklace and Udomsak's new Yamaha Mio motor-scooter were seized as evidence. Udomsak (the name means "abounding honor") confessed to the theft charge after being confronted by Tommy.

"But I had no idea that this teenager I was making love to was his son!" he added.

Udomsak said he had used the victim's cash to pay legal fees arising from an arrest on similar charges last December 17. Curiously, Udomsak was not charged with prostitution – although he admitted demanding money for sex and was caught during the latest incident *in flagrante delicto*.

Source: Siang Tai

Thiphalak Raun collects her prize of a souvenir from Land Rover from PGTV Executive Producer Marc Mulloy for having a 'We Love Phuket' sticker on her car.



'We Love Phuket' sticker campaign



Parichat Utintu collects her prize of a voucher for dinner for two at Noon Japanese Restaurant at Surin Beach from Jaroon Boonchu, the restaurant's manager.

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Airport to open on time – despite blaze

Suvarnabhumi Airport will open for commercial services in June as scheduled, despite a fire on January 18 at the five-story Thai Airways International (THAI) catering building on January 18 that left one construction worker dead and three injured.

THAI's acting president Somchainuk Engtrakul said the damage was limited to an area of about 30 square meters that was part of a business firm located inside the airport.

The fire is believed to have broken out in the afternoon in a first-floor kitchen cold storage room. Primary investigations suggest the blaze started as construction workers were connecting a steam-piping system.

Initial estimates of damage are about 20 million baht. K. Somchainuk said a team of engineering consultants and contractors was given one week to assess the damage and formulate a recovery plan.

Communication breakdown: Suspected militants burned down almost 30 mobile phone base-stations belonging to AIS, DTAC and Orange mobile phone services in coordinated attacks across four Deep South provinces.

The attacks started at about 7 pm on January 18 in Rusoh, Rangae, Sungai Kolok and Tak Bai districts of Narathiwat. These were followed about 30 minutes later by attacks on stations in Muang, Yarang and Nong Chik districts of Pattani, and more in Songkhla's Thepha district. Mobile phone base stations in Muang and Raman districts of Yala provinces were also torched.

Cool cabbies: Thai taxi drivers have bolstered the foundering image of their profession by returning large amounts of cash left



Construction of the second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River has resumed after the collapse of a crane last year that caused the death of several workers and a Japanese engineer. The bridge, from Mukdahan to Savannakhet in Laos, is 75% complete.

behind in their cabs by forgetful British passengers.

Phut Dokmaiin, a 63-year-old taxi driver in Samut Prakan, returned the equivalent of 630,000 baht in British currency to housewife Ladda Hill and her husband, who had left the money behind in K. Phut's cab. The couple, who had given up hope of having the money returned, rewarded the honest driver with 10,000 baht.

In Chon Buri, 34-year-old cabbie Jaikla Thongphaen performed a similar act of kindness by driving back to a hotel and returning a suitcase containing 164,500 baht and the passport of forgetful English tourist Wilson Matthew, who left the suitcase in

the taxi by mistake. Matthew, 31, thanked the driver profusely and gave him a 26,000-baht reward.

Devoted spouse: Police arrested taxi driver Somphorn Yoophool at a love motel in Nakhon Sawan, accusing him of being the taxi driver whose tongue was bitten off by a female passenger he was allegedly trying to rape last December.

Amphornrat Nakheowngarm, who claimed to be the suspect's wife, said the woman who had bitten off Somphorn's tongue was not a rape victim – because she had agreed to have sex with him for money.

"She bit off his tongue while

they were kissing after she had just learned he did not have enough money," Amphornrat said.

Somphorn had wanted to turn himself in to police the day after the incident, but was afraid he would not be able to explain everything clearly without his tongue, the woman added.

Fashion trend: Wearing cosmetic contact lenses that make eyes sparkle could cause eye damage or even blindness, Public Health Minister Pinij Charusombat warned.

Such contact lenses, popular with youngsters seeking to make their eyes more attractive,

can cause scratched pupils, irritation and infection of the eyes, double vision and even blindness. People with normal vision should avoid contact lenses altogether, he said.

The lenses, which are in vogue in Japan, are available online at prices ranging from 400 baht to 2,000 baht per pair, he said.

The Food and Drug Administration plans to ask the Office of Consumer Protection to act on the issue by regulating labeling and advertising.

In hot water: La Defense, a massage parlor on Bangkok's Rama IX Rd, was closed for 30 days for employing underage girls and illegal immigrants as masseuses.

Three senior officers at Wang Thonglang Police Station have been transferred to inactive posts while an investigation is conducted. Two others are facing investigation on serious disciplinary matters in connection with the case, a police source said.

Another investigation is being carried out to determine whether charges of human trafficking could be laid against the owners of La Defense.

Fare is fair: The Transport Ministry rejected calls from private bus operators for permission to hike their fares. Deputy Transport Minister Gen Chaiyanan Charoensiri said the Ministry would allow a fare hike in line with rising fuel prices only when the operators had improved the condition of their buses and the services they provided to their passengers.

Around the Nation news round-up is sourced from the pages of The Nation and Kom Chad Luek newspapers.

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ACROSS THE BAY

By Gus Reynolds

After a robust November last year, local businesses were optimistic about the upcoming tourist season. Many businesses had struggled to survive in the aftermath of the tsunami, which saw a low season lasting from February to November.

But just when things looked as if they might be picking up again, business softened. December was a disappointment, particularly for the higher-end hotels. Vacancies during the Christmas period were common, with some hoteliers panicking and cutting rates.

As one major hotel owner said, "This season is not a success – we will have to wait for next year."

The New Year holiday saw the hotels full again, and some business owners were not so pessimistic. But now advance bookings for the rest of the season remain sporadic, and only time will tell.

Some blamed the weakness in December on the first anniversary of the tsunami, with the commemoration ceremonies and publicity keeping some tourists away during the Christmas period. Others point to the reduction in airline services between Bangkok and Krabi.

In past years, several carriers had serviced the Bangkok-



Expansion work at Krabi Airport last August.

Poor air links with Krabi hinder business recovery

Krabi route, with as many as 12 flights a day. This year, however, Thai Airways International (THAI) is the only airline on the route, with just four flights a day. Frustrated tourists have had to fly in and out of Phuket, with the prospect of a two-hour taxi journey at both ends of their trip.

Some hotels have reported cancellations of bookings because guests could not get direct flights into Krabi. The high cost of the service itself does not help matters. One wonders how it can be cheaper to fly from Krabi to Singapore on Tiger Air than it is to fly to Bangkok on THAI.

Children's Day: January 14 saw Children's Day celebrations taking place all over the Kingdom,

and Krabi was no exception. The Krabi Municipality sponsored a Children's Day event in scenic Thara Park alongside the Krabi River.

Some 4,000 children and families attended, enjoying the singing and dancing performances put on by the children.

Throughout the day, painting, games and other activities were set up in different areas of the park for the children to enjoy.

Of special note was the area for orphans and tsunami children, sponsored by the Sriphong Phukaoluan Foundation (see the foundation's website at www.krabiirelief.com). Several tents were set up specifically for these children.

The foundation is currently

sponsoring 89 children who lost at least one parent to the tsunami. The children receive monthly financial aid, clothing including school uniforms, and supplies.

Chuan Phukaoluan, President of the Foundation, notes that there are more than a dozen more children waiting for sponsorship.

On Children's Day, the Foundation provided food and arranged games for the children, and two physicians were also on hand to provide free medical checkups and dispense medicines to the children and family members.

Highlander helper: Previous columns have covered the great work being done by Andrew Hewett to clean up Tonsai Bay

on the Phi Phi Islands after the tsunami. Hewett owns The Adventure Club, an eco-tour company, and has lived on Phi Phi for 11 years.

On the morning of December 26, 2004, he not only lost this business, but also watched his house being swept out to sea.

He then started the Phi Phi Tsunami Dive Camp, and with the help of countless volunteers tirelessly cleaned debris from Tonsai Bay.

Krabi Province is lucky to have such a dedicated resident, who has made a major effort to restore Phi Phi to its natural state of beauty.

Andrew himself is lucky to have had so many helping hands, one of the most steadfast being his brother, Adrian Paul.

Adrian is better known to many as the star of the popular US TV series, *Highlander*.

His acting career has taken him around the globe, and fans can see him later this year in his upcoming movie sequel: *Highlander: The Source*.

Being a Hollywood star hasn't changed Adrian's commitments to the ideals he holds true. His charity foundation, PEACE – or Protect, Educate, Aid Children Everywhere – has been active in many places, helping children in need.

Adrian has used his status in Hollywood to raise money through celebrity auctions, and has provided donations to aid his brother's project on Phi Phi. He is also sponsoring eight tsunami orphans until the age of 18 through the Sriphong Phukaoluan Foundation.

On a recent visit to Krabi, Adrian talked of his long-term commitment to the ideals of his PEACE Foundation. It is a tribute that a man of so many talents spends so much energy on the betterment of the communities and children in need.

You can see his work at www.adrianpaulpeace.org

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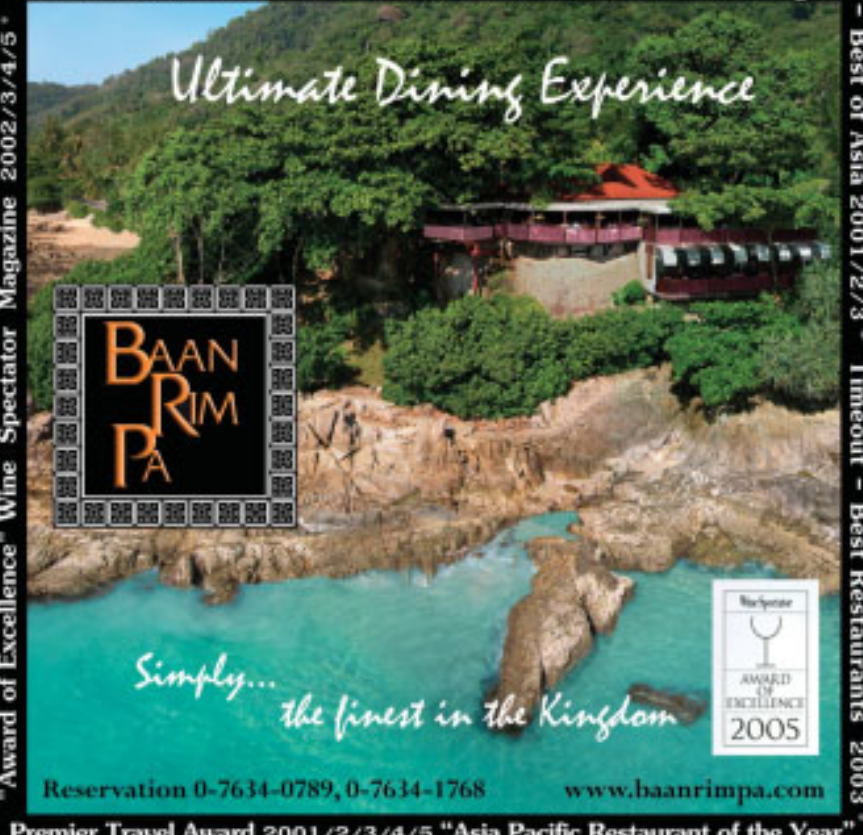


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Whispering Cock, at entrance to Laguna Phuket
Yacht Haven / Haven Restaurant, Mai Khao
Yacht Haven Marina Office, Mai Khao

The first thing these people need is water

By Natcha Yuttaworawit

The 2,067 residents of Baan Lum La, Baan Luk Dio and Baan Lang Pom, three villages in Tambon Mai Khao, have finally had their requests for a regular supply of water and a health center answered, at least in part.

They also want a public-address system and a sea wall, although right now, the priority, according to Tammy Barrett, an American volunteer with the Thachatchai Tsunami Relief Center (TTRC), is to establish water supply.

"The TTRC has many projects in the planning stage that have not yet received funding from the Mai Khao Tambon Administration Organization (*Or-BorTor*)," said Ms Barrett.

"For example, the TTRC hopes to provide the villagers and the center's staff with Internet service, to start a *sala*-building business to employ locals and to construct a building to showcase the villagers' new skills and preserve the Sea Gypsy heritage – they account for around 20% of the entire population – of the area."

Ms Barrett told the *Gazette*, "Our main purpose is to help [the local] people with what

Of the three villages, only Baan Lang Pom has a fresh – although not potable – water reservoir nearby, which holds enough water to supply just that village



Tammy Barrett of the TTRC.

'The people of this area are innovative, hard-working, kind and generous. Any assistance would be very much appreciated'

they want and need – to continue getting their lives back in order after the tsunami; our first aim is to secure clean drinking water for them."

Of the three villages, only Baan Lang Pom has a fresh – although not potable – water reservoir nearby, which holds enough water to supply just that village. Both Baan Lum La and Baan Luk Dio had wells and a water-holding system supplying water to

each house, but that was before the tsunami.

"The saltwater contaminated the ground water and the wells can no longer be used," said Ms Barrett.

"We have just finished outlining a detailed budget," she said, "and we estimate that 12,703,297 baht is required to develop a freshwater supply system. We're just beginning a fund-raising drive."



"The government has been helpful; they gave us a piece of land on which to build the health center. However, they don't have the money to actually construct it, although, when complete, it will belong to the government. The TTRC has already raised the money for staff salaries. Our deadline to finish the project is eight months from now." She added, "The people of this area are innovative, hard working, kind

and generous. Any assistance would be very much appreciated."

For more information or to donate, please contact Somporn Thansakul, another volunteer with the TTRC, or Tammy Barrett at 22/50 Moo 5, Tambon Mai Khao, Amphur Thalung, Phuket, Thailand, 83140. Call K. Somporn at Tel: 07-284-9676, or Email: tammyb@nustyle.net



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Happily Ever After

Recent weddings in Phuket



Mongkol Saenapitak and Ariya Sakulthep were married at the Royal Phuket City Hotel on December 11, 2005.



Mallika Tiamkaew and Theirry Devos were wed in the Red Onion Restaurant at the top of the Royal Phuket City Hotel on January 13.

DOING THE

Panupong Banditsak is in charge of Phuket's controversial Mid Road Dog Shelter in Thalang, where more than 400 of the island's estimated 3,400 feral canines are now confined. The 25-year-old Phuket Rajabhat University graduate has been working in noisy, foul-smelling, isolated conditions five days a week eight hours a day, or longer in emergencies, since September last year. He spoke with the *Gazette's* Suwakon Rakmanee about his job.

Dog Pound Chief Panupong Banditsak pulls no punches. "Nobody wants to work here," he says.

The holder of a science degree, he was a Level 3 Phuket Provincial Livestock Office (PPLO) veterinarian before being assigned to the dog pound.

"My duties are not so different from those in my previous job. Instead of goats and oxen, I take care of dogs exclusively now. And I work with a smaller team of staff. There are only three in addition to me.

"Every day, we give the dogs fresh water and clean the shelter.

"We feed them rice and dog kibble every day at 10 am, but there just isn't enough to go round. There are so many dogs; they are always ravenous.

"They tend to fight over the food and once in a while a worker gets bitten in the dogs' scramble to eat.

"But we have a good rela-

tionship with the dogs and we know they don't deliberately go after us.

"Every day we have to treat a handful of sick and injured dogs. Some dogs fight; and some catch pneumonia in the rainy season or suffer from skin diseases," he explains.

It isn't always easy to catch and care for a sick or injured dog in the pound.

"Rounding up a dog in here requires good teamwork," K. Panupong says. "Occasionally the animals require care in the middle of the night. I have had to get up at 1 am to treat a sick dog, but I feel for the dogs and

am never too tired to do something to help.

"We currently have dogs as young as one month and as old as 10 years right now. Sadly, some of the dogs in the shelter already died – of old age – and some of the remaining dogs are terminally ill."

Dogs that die are buried within the 2.5-rai plot that the shelter occupies.

Every month one or two dogs, often with pups, are abandoned at the gate of the pound.

"It's heartbreaking," says Panupong Banditsak, "and I think the people who do this are really selfish."

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JOB THAT NOBODY WANTS



There are three large pens with 2.5-meter-high fences. Each of these holds more than 100 dogs, while four or five smaller pens, can each contain up to five dogs.

When dogs are unruly, K. Panupong separates them, sometimes putting several into the smaller pens or cages for their own safety as well as that of the others. The very young and the very old are also separated from the rest of the pack.

Occasionally, dogs manage to escape, but the shelter's workers have always been able to catch and return them, K. Panupong says. Some dogs, having leaped over the fence to run away, have returned of their own volition, for the food.

“There are too many dogs

in the large pens now for all the dogs to feel at ease. Fortunately, the provincial government has donated an additional three-rai plot adjacent to the existing shelter, which will become part of the pound.

“We make sure each dog is sterilized before putting it in a pen with other dogs. We still have to come up with more effective measures to manage the stray dog population that remains at large across Phuket.

"In the meantime, I can't help but expect the number of

dogs kept here to increase. The Mid Road Dog Shelter is already full, but that doesn't stop people from bringing us more dogs.

"Besides the fact that the PPLO rounds up strays once a month and drops them here, one or two dogs – often a bitch that has recently given birth, along with her pups – are abandoned, left tied to our gate, almost every week by Phuket residents. It's heartbreaking, and I think the people who do this are really selfish," he says.

Last September, the shelter

Left, Panupong Banditsak: 'I feel for the dogs and am never too tired to do something to help.' Below, food is prepared for the dogs.



received 500 10-kilogram bags – supposedly enough to feed all the dogs for a full year – of dog kibble from the provincial government. “It isn’t enough,” says K. Panupong, “so the workers eke it out by mixing it with rice. They cook 100kg of rice every day for the dogs.”

At the beginning of January, the shelter received a donation of 2,500kg of rice, but the supply is already worryingly low. The pound received generous private donations of money and food during the initial stages of its operation, but the donations have dried up recently.

"Nobody is donating anything to us, and the dogs' rations aren't enough to make them to feel full all day," K. Panupong says. "I feel sorry for these animals."

K. Panupong suggests what he feels is one of the causes of the island's stray dog population.

"When a dog is a puppy, it's cute and cuddly, but when it be-

comes an adult, if not properly cared for and trained, it may be unfriendly or bite. Fully-grown dogs may not be quite as attractive as puppies; that's one reason why people kick a pet out of the house and into the street, leave it behind when they move, or drop it off at the shelter.

"I wish pet owners were more considerate to their four-legged friends and took responsibility for them," K. Panupong says. "If people truly understood the living conditions their dog would have here, I like to believe they would think twice before dumping it."

The Mid Road Dog Shelter will accept donations of food or money to help carry on its work. Contact the PPLO, which is located at 15/6 Amphur Rd, Tambon Talad Yai, Muang, Phuket, 83000, or call PPLO Chief Sunart Wongchavalit at Tel: 076-216934, 06-5841742 for more information.

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The award-winning Executive Chef at Sala Bua, **Ronnie Macaju**, says, "There is no utensil more important to me than my set of knives."

"Aside from their more obvious use, which is to cut, depending on the kind of knife, they can be used to fillet, pare, trim, peel, skin, slice, chop, wedge, portion and sliver. Versatility aside, they are the chef's primary tool."

"How to use a knife is probably one of the most important lessons a budding chef has to learn. And treated with care, a well-constructed knife can be a chef's friend for a really long time."

Globetrotting **Harold Schwarz** at Tatonka concurs: "My favorite kitchen utensil is a long-bladed fillet knife, similar to the Japanese ones, to fillet fish mainly, but also to slice other things."

GRIDDLE

He adds, "For us at Tatonka the most indispensable things in our kitchen are solid, thick, black iron griddles – locals grill their rotis or *pad Thai* on these. We have several of them on top of double-burner rings and we grill, blacken or fry almost anything on them. They're very useful to have."

Scott Flaxman at the Watermark Restaurant & Bar says, "There are so many utensils used on a daily basis in the kitchen that initially I could not think of one favorite, but several."

"Eventually, I narrowed my list down to one favorite and that has to be a small, stick blender, commonly known as a 'wand' in catering circles. It has countless uses, from blending a soup to making pestos and thinning out sauces."

"However, the most indispensable utensil in the kitchen, I think, has to be color-coded chop-

Cutting edge chefs and their favorite things

Have you ever wondered just how top chefs concoct their own particular magic? What's the secret and how do they do it? The *Gazette's* Sam Wilkinson, determined to get to the bottom of things, recently asked some of the island's culinary wizards, "What kitchen utensil can you not live without?"



Ronnie Macaju says the most important thing to him is his set of knives, while Cindy Basanti swears by her charcoal-fired tandoori oven.



ping boards. They help prevent cross contamination among foods, and prevent the possibility

of food poisoning. For example, a green chopping board is for fruit and vegetables, which is in the 'low risk' category of contracting food poisoning, while the blue chopping board is for fish, which is in the high risk category.

"In the kitchen you have to be vigilant about this or problems will arise."

Meanwhile, in Phuket City at Kanasutra, **Cindy Basanti** from Nepal swears by the Indian restaurant's charcoal-fired tandoori oven.

Owner Billy Chima explains that it's a large affair on a con-

crete plinth surrounded by a retaining wall and filled with 40% sand, 40% salt and 20% broken glass – all of which are great heat retainers.

Cindy adds that if she could have anything at all to add to the kitchen's accessories it would be a traditional steamer to make basmati rice, used in a buriani.

Scott Flaxman adds, "On my wish list for the kitchen would have to be a blast chiller to enable me to rapidly chill food in a matter of minutes."

"Working in such a hot environment – kitchens are gener-

ally five to eight degrees hotter than the ambient temperature – bacteria multiply every 20 minutes, so it is imperative to be able to chill down prepared food rapidly to minimize the amount of bacterial growth, especially in high-risk foods."

Don't all rush out and buy filleting knives, chopping boards and ovens, though.

These chefs have been hard at it for years – and they all agree that absolutely nothing can replace experience as the main ingredient in their culinary creations.

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By Gazette staff

As if you didn't know it, January 29 is the start of the Chinese Year of the Dog. People born under this sign are (supposed to be) kind, unselfish and successful. And anyone who has ever befriended an amiable mutt or two will vouch for the fact that they can be adorable companions.

It's no wonder then, that doggie bric-a-brac and memorabilia are in this year.

So you won't be barking up the wrong tree if you were to check out the "promotion area" at Big C (just inside the right-hand front door). There, you can sniff out canine-themed novelty items galore, such as a ceramic "doggie-bank" for 299 baht, or good luck amulets with a Chinese goddess on one side and an image of a dog on the other for 89 baht.

Doggy mobile phone accessories are a must for those who seek good fortune, and at the very least you should grab yourself a canine key ring.

The list goes on with dog clips, colored-glass rovers, a dog clock and doll set and puppy-themed good luck books. Pity they don't stock hi-fi speakers because a pair of sub-woofers would fit right in here.

For more information contact K. Kitiya "Kae" Chuadkrod at 06-9454030.

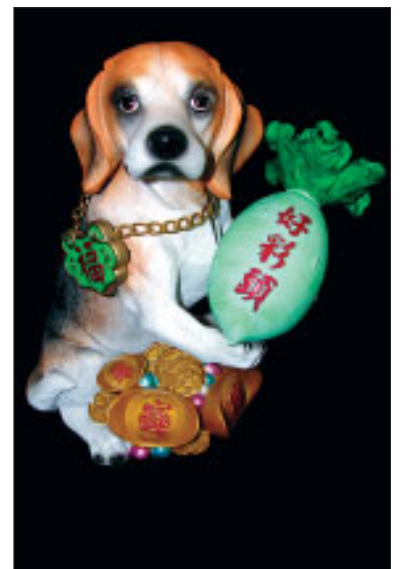
Another option is to visit the "I Have A Dream" stationery and gift shop, also at Big C. There's more puppy paraphernalia there than you can shake a (walking) stick at.

Doggy slippers go for 159 baht and yes, there are more dog books, CD holders, and even a large dog cuddly toy that retails for 690 baht.

For the motorist with a canine bent there are dog-themed car safety belt accessories (the mind boggles) for 199 baht, and a large can of Pedigree Chum for 80 baht. The last one we made up. Time to bow out of here.

"I Have A Dream", Tel: 076-249408; Email: dogthailand@yahoo.com or visit the website at www.ihaveadream.co.th

Going barking mad in the Year of the Dog



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This week



MOBILE BREAK: Sigve Brekke (center), CEO of Thai mobile phone operator DTAC, and his wife are welcomed to Phuket FantaSea by the theme park's CEO, Kittikorn Kewkacha, during their recent visit to Phuket.



BOXCAR CUISINE: Phuket Vice-Governor Worapoj Rattasrima (right) and Phuket City Mayor Somjai Suwannasuppana ring a bell to signal for all to get 'on board' at the January 12 grand opening of the Santa Fe Steak & More restaurant at the Tesco-Lotus supercenter.



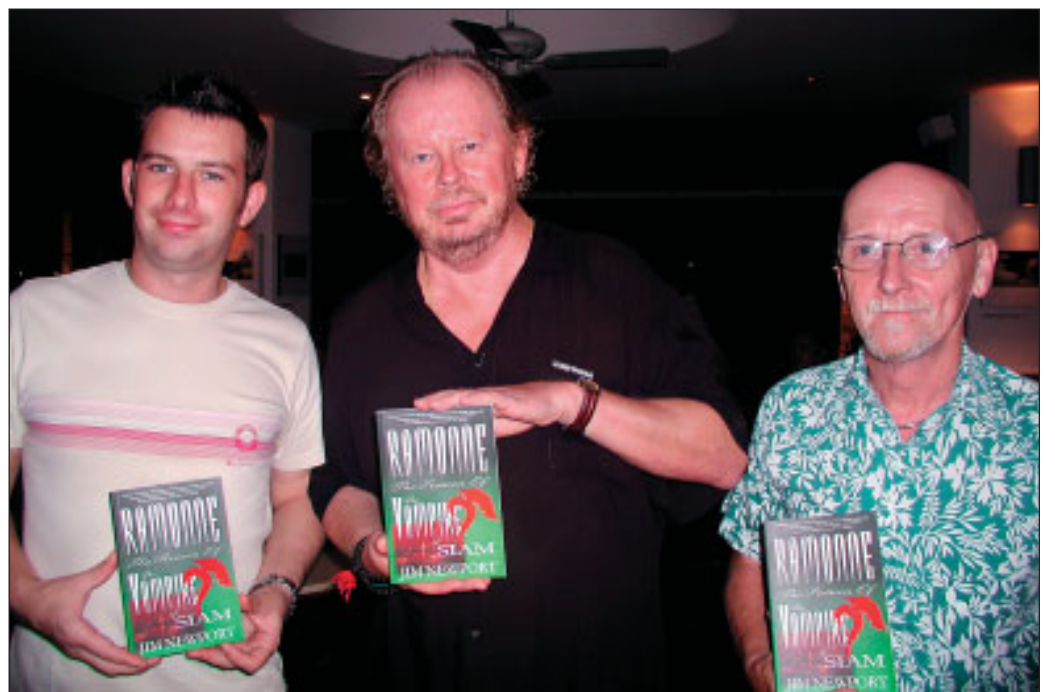
A HIGHER GOAL: Former Ajax soccer player Tony Perdon celebrated his 60th birthday recently by handing out to 75 tsunami-affected children more than 80,000 baht in education grants, school equipment and bone fide brand-name football gear from his friend Heinz Oechlin, in Zurich, Switzerland.



BELGIQUE CHIC: Belgian pop stars Kate Ryan (2nd from left) and Hadise Acikgoz (3rd from right) pose with (from left) Baan Yin Dee Group GM Azuan Noordin and MD Hans De Beer, Bran Records Producer Senol Korkmaz, Sevda Durukan and Bran Records Assistant Producer Frederik Oppeel, during their recent stay at Baan Yin Dee Boutique Resort in Patong.



SOFT GROOVE: Jay Ujjin (right), owner of the upscale Ratri Jazztaurant, welcomes jazz musician Eddie 'Autobahn' (left) and VIP guest Pam Parlawatrichai to the recent soft opening of the Kata hillside bistro.



SIAMESE BEASTIARY: Jim Newport (center) celebrated the recent launch of *Ramonne: The Return of the Vampire*, his sequel to the *The Vampire of Siam*, at the Watermark Bar & Restaurant with Watermark MD Stuart Bird (left) and Chainsaw Wilson, lead vocalist of blues band the Groove Doctors.

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Scaring the pants off you, in a laid-back sort of way

According to the taxi driver, speaking in the laconic twang that is the hallmark of any Kiwi enjoying a really good joke, "Queenstown has got about 100 different ways to scare the pants off you."

He was terrifyingly correct. New Zealand's ski capital doesn't stop at downhill, moguls and jumps. Year round, visitors are invited to throw themselves into the air from a bridge, a plane or off the side of a mountain, attached only to a modest assortment of gravity-arresting equipment.

On the raging waters of the Shotover River – closer to the earth's surface but not necessarily much safer – there are jet boats which scream towards cliffs at 70kmh, and a 170-meter tunnel through the mountainside to be negotiated by raft.

Pilots in biplanes and helicopters itch to demonstrate that flying is just as lunatic a proposition as when Daedalus and Icarus first launched themselves skyward. And if just one of these entertainments is insufficient, try the Awesome Foursome – a roller coaster helicopter flip to

Deep Creek. Follow this with a jet boat ride to Skipper's Bridge, a 70-meter bungy jump and a rafting trip culminating in the darkened, roaring clamor of the Oxenbridge Tunnel, all one after the other. Three hundred and thirty wet, wild minutes. Boring it ain't.

It's not 100% white knuckle 24/7, but the emphasis in and around Queenstown is very much on the outdoor lifestyle. Abseiling and mountain climbing are on offer, the angling – crystal clear waters with an abundance of fish – is stupen-

dous, and you can hop on a bike for a bit of cross country, simply hoof it ("tramping", as it's called locally), or take a four-wheel drive.

Journeys lead along lake shores, through primordial forests – after all, this is the land where they filmed *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy – or along historic trails through small towns that have grown up in the wilderness.

The air is so pure that you can practically taste it, and the light means that this is a photographer's Arcadia.

With boots off and clothes hung up to dry, there's time to



sample Queenstown's restorative techniques. Hearty food and something to wash it down with is the staple of a plethora of entertainments on offer, from a Mexican bar to a Swiss igloo, romping, stomping pubs and quiet health-conscious cafés.

In addition to home-cooked fare from the menus, there's a totally amicable ambiance.

The barman or waitress has probably been out abseiling or bungy jumping that morning any-

way, and will join in an exchange of "cheating death by inches" anecdotes.

One of the most attractive points about Queenstown is that there's no sense of dumb punter and cynical supplier – everybody does it and enjoys it. The people who live there like to see others sharing their fun, and are quite content that this is their livelihood as well.

Nobody shows off, either. "It's cool to bungy jump," says

Ricky, the chunky, shaven-headed dispatcher, as he completes the ties around a pair of ankles as nervy as the rest of the body, "and if you don't feel up to it, it's just as cool not to."

Queenstown has a perennially laid-back feel.

And considering that the thrills and spills on offer are pretty much unparalleled in the rest of the southern hemisphere, being laid-back really is only half the fun.

TALES OF A TRAVELER

By Ed Peters



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Mom Tri's Villa Royale The Gourmet Hotel is composed of two of the most exquisite sites on the south west coast of Phuket Island in Thailand. Facilities include Gourmet restaurants, award-winning Wine cellars, Mom Tri's Spa Royale, Mom Tri's Gallery, shops, wedding, banquet, and meeting facilities.



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Mom Tri's Gung Thai-Japanese Inspired Cuisine on Kata Beach offers casual beach-side dining. The menu is essentially Japanese but with a unique Thai twist. Tel: 076-330-015

It is 20 years to the month since I first bumped into Lady Penelope "Patsy" Creighton-Ward, the well-known alpinist, former member of now-disbanded pop band Toto Coelo, and benefactress to sherpas both near and far, in a Dorsetshire field.

Her steed, apparently lame, threw her and then refused to trot any further. I produced one of those essential pieces of kit I have a fondness for, and, using the tool for removing stones from horses' hooves, removed a stone from her horse's hoof.

Lady P and I next bumped into each other 10 years later in January 1996. There were no strings attached, but the debt of honor was repaid when she – using the self-same essential piece of kit – removed a sliver of shrapnel from my bloody right bicep in barmy Banja Luka.

Noticing that a fair amount of my precious B Rhesus Negative was staining my uniform, and wishing to know when it might stop, I asked Patsy, "What's the bleeding time?"

"Ten past ten, Andy."

DULCET

There are neither horses nor howitzers in sight for our serendipitous third meeting – right here in Phuket, just the other night.

Walking along Patak Rd in Kata, having parked my car some meters from Bella Vista, tonight's *boîte*, I am amazed to overhear her dulcet tones as she talks to a temperamental tuk-tuk driver: "I missed you," says she, aiming her Baby Glock better this time.

Since I am without a dining companion, and since Patsy suddenly needs to lie low for a few hours, she accepts my invitation.

We take the scenic route across the beach to Bella Vista, which is on the southernmost point of Kata Yai Beach, and is part of the charming Villa Elisabeth, which I am told is a quartet of splendidly romantic suites.

Greeted by Peerasak "Ae" Sripuk and Swiss Erwin Scherzmann, one of the owners and a man for whom the adjective "jocular" barely does jus-

On the menu



WITH
Andy Johnstone

Bella Vista

tice, we espy Elisabeth Esterman, again Swiss, the co-owner and head chef.

She is busying herself in the kitchen with a smile on her face and what sounds like the whisper of a song on her lips.

Taking our seats beneath a canopy of branches, an immense sense of relaxation descends in this chock-a-block full two-terrace restaurant. Erwin says they may add a third, lower, terrace soon, replete with sumptuous sofas.

My eyes, Lady P's eyes and no doubt every diner's eyes, are drawn to the salt-sharpened lights glinting along the beach, and to stars seen through the leaves above. Generous G&Ts in hands, we feel the welcome gentle pace of Bella Vista – the view is indeed beautiful – wash over us. "No need to rush," advises K. Ae. "Just take your time."

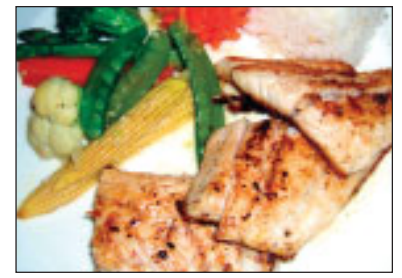
And we do.

Some considerable time later we actually get round to ordering our appetizers. This is not easy in a fine-dining restaurant such as Bella Vista. Scanning the tables of the other diners offers a hint of Thai and European classics; we choose a plate of calamari and one of smoked salmon and capers.

It is busy here, with some punters either waiting an hour or so for a table, or making a reservation – sensible idea – for the next night.

"People come back night after night," K. Ae tells us. His is no idle boast; the gentle familiarity of Erwin, K. Ae and the staff with their diners speaks volumes about the restaurant's subtle effect on people.

"One couple dined here for four nights, and on the fifth night,



We'll meet again

he proposed to her," reports K. Ae. "She accepted."

Between mouthfuls of exquisite calamari – the batter is deliciously thin and fragrant with garlic – and dynamite salmon, its natural oiliness cut through by the capers, we ask each other if fine dining need be expensive. Absolutely not, we decide, with the evidence rapidly disappearing in front of us; the calamari is 220 baht, the salmon just 280 baht, and the portions are copious.

K. Ae, a man with a wealth of hotel and culinary experience both within and outside Thailand, recommends the Alkoomi Sauvignon Blanc 2003. Fresh and scented with hints of guava, its crispness is welcome. So is the price, at 2,400 baht a bottle.

Almost 9:30 pm now, we have been here for two hours, and we are only just considering our main course.

Good company helps, naturally, and the atmosphere is so dedicated to relaxation that anything faster than one course ev-

ery 120 minutes would seem indecently hasty.

Feeling that my red-blood cell count needs a boost, I decide on an Australian sirloin steak (650 baht) with green pepper sauce – tender enough to part like the Red Sea by merely pointing at it.

The sauce is pleasantly peppery and spot on; no need for a shake of salt or an additional twist of pepper. A mass of chips and vegetables accompanies it.

Patsy reveals that her fillet of white snapper (350 baht) is somewhere between divine and sublime. Does she let me taste it? Does she hell.

K. Ae supplies me with a stunning glass of Chateau Marquis de Terme 2002, which is intense with blackcherries and the hint of oak, to go with my steak. Yummy. Double yummy, in fact.

A pleasant age later, light desserts in the shape of a vodka sherbet for me and a champagne sherbet for Milady are chosen. Served in large cognac glasses, the sherbets are made with the

booze of choice before being served afloat on a chilled sea of the same booze. Iced, and wozy, heaven.

The long day's cooking over for Elisabeth, she has time to join us. The easy chat between Erwin, Elisabeth, K. Ae, Patsy and me leads me in the blink of an eye to correct myself. It isn't "familiarity" at Bella Vista, it's "family". Erwin and Elisabeth welcome all to their delightful and seriously upmarket restaurant as if we're kith and kin.

No wonder people feel so at home here and go back so often. I do, and I will. And Lady P? Well, hopefully it won't be another 10 years before we meet again...

Bella Vista Oceanfront Terrace Restaurant, 2-29 Patak Rd, Kata Yai Beach. Tel: 076-284086, or K. Ae at 01-8941603 for more information and reservations, which are recommended, or visit www.phuketvilla-elisabeth.com

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BEHIND THE WHEEL

By Jeff Heselwood

According to Mazda, the Ford-owned Japanese automaker, "Compact usually means compromise. In exchange for an attractive sticker price and low running costs, compact car buyers often have to put up with budget build-quality, miserly equipment and a mediocre drive."

Well, they said it... but the new Mazda3 is an exception. It is neither mediocre nor low on equipment. In short, it is one of the best small cars to come out of Japan for many a year.

In Thailand it comes equipped with either a 1.6 or 2-liter gasoline (or gasohol) motor, mated to a five-speed manual or four-speed auto transmission.

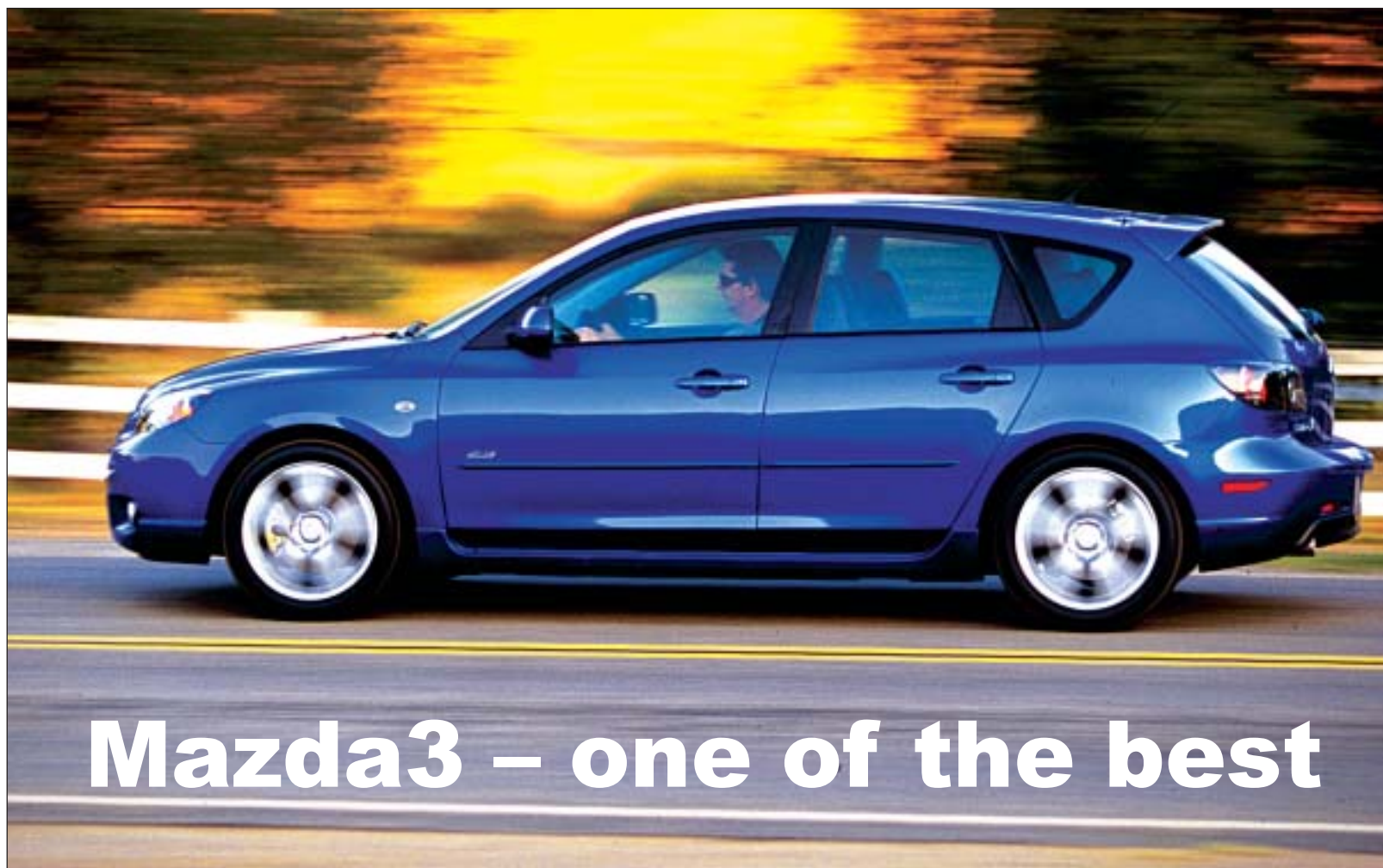
In some other markets it is available with Mazda's impressive 2.3-liter in-line four, but that is not a choice here.

COLORS

Also available is a wide selection of colors to choose from, including diamond white (it is an amazing fact that 60% of all cars sold in Japan are white – but nobody really knows why), metallic silver or blue, and black.

The 1.6 model delivers a tame 103bhp (77kW), while the larger engine produces a reasonable 141bhp (104kW). Both models have significant mid-range torque – 145Nm and 181Nm respectively.

Mazda has churned out a raft of new models in the past few years, all the work of chief designer Murray Callum – brother of Jaguar design boss Ian Callum



– and a team of stylists at Mazda's headquarters in Hiroshima, with input from its California studio.

The Mazda6 was the first to benefit from Callum's expertise and was a long-awaited – and sorely needed – replacement for the venerable 626. Next came the little Mazda2 and now the Mazda3.

The Mazda5 people-carrier is currently not available in the Kingdom.

Still in the line-up, and benefiting from a recent revamp by Callum and his crew, is the delightful MX-5 two-seater sports, now fully 17 years old but still a great little motor car.

Both models of the Mazda3 feature dual SRS airbags and anti-lock braking, while the 2-liter version also has side airbags and full-length air curtains. Both

cars feature electro-hydraulic power steering, a fairly recent innovation that does not sap engine power.

Despite its compact proportions the Mazda is surprisingly roomy inside, boasting one of the largest cabins in its class. Mazda claims the interior is longer, wider and taller than any similar car, offering more front and rear shoulder room, as well as more clearance for passengers' knees.

The seats, says Mazda, have been designed with long-distance comfort in mind. Leather is an option that can be fitted by the local dealer. The rear seatbacks split in a 60:40 ratio to

allow extra luggage space, and will fold almost flat to increase load capacity. A sub-trunk area allows valuables to be hidden from sight. A cavernous glovebox can accommodate a laptop or up to 16 CDs, and there is additional storage in a center console, which also has twin cupholders. Other equipment rarely found at this level includes body-colored door mirrors, fog lamps and sports bumpers, front and rear.

Safety is also taken care of with Mazda's unique safety cage which directs impact energy from the front of the car to the outer side members and into the hinge pillar. A three-fork safety struc-

ture also sends lateral energy through a dashboard cross member and downward into the sills to minimize cabin deformation around the occupants' feet.

Altogether, the latest small Mazda is an impressive piece of kit and is also reasonably priced. The two-liter version sells at a moderate 984,000 baht, while the smaller engined car is just 844,200 baht.

Jeff Heselwood may be contacted by email at jhc@netvigator.com

Additional reporting by Ananya Hongsa-ngiam

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PHUKET DIARY

of coming events

Until February 11: "Abstracts of Industry" photo exhibition. This exhibition of photography by award-winning photographer, US-born Chris Swift, is on display in the foyer of the British Curriculum International School.

It can be seen between 8:30 am and 3:30 pm, Monday to Friday. It features a sugar mill, boats and trains in abstract, taken mainly in and around Bangkok and Kanchanaburi.

For more information contact Tel: 07-1129568; Email: cswift1@swift-mail.com; or visit the website at www.swift-images.com

January 27-31: QBE Phang Nga Bay Regatta. The ninth year of the "Fun Regatta", around Phang Nga Bay to Phi Phi and back to Phuket.

The racing takes the fleet to Koh Yao, Krabi and back to Phi Phi before the final dash to Phuket. For race and party notices, visit the organization's website at www.bayregatta.com

January 28-29: Red Hot Salsa Party. Salsa Bangkok in association with Salsa Girl Phuket proudly presents the Red Hot Salsa Party at Tai Life Spa and Health Club (poolside), Soi Sunset, Patong (behind Tai Pan), from 8 pm until 2 am. Special

performances by DJ Henry Knowles – the world's No 1 salsa DJ – from New York, Thailand's leading salsa couple and more special guests from Bangkok. Free beginner salsa & merengue workshop from 8:30 pm-9:30 pm. Entrance fee of 300 baht includes one drink. Don't miss it...

For further information and reservations please call Apple at 01-9355049, or Email: applegold@gmail.com

January 31-February 2: Peranakan Chinese New Year Festival. Phuket will ring in the Year Of The Dog with a special celebration of its ethnic Chinese roots. Between January 31 and February 2, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Phuket Provincial Administration Organization (*OrBorJor*) and Phuket City Municipality will jointly host the 19th annual Peranakan Festival, the first time the festival has been held in Thailand.

Peranakan is a Malay word originally meaning "local born", but is used now to refer to the unique cultures that sprang up along parts of the Andaman coast as a result of intermarriage between Hokkien Chinese settlers and indigenous Thais and Malays.

Activities will include:

- Special cultural performances and presentations from



Chinese New Year is a time for dressing in traditional Peranakan style, known locally as 'yaya'.

the People's Republic of China;

- A Peranakan cultural exhibition;

- A cultural showcase of Phuket's own Peranakan: their traditions and way of life, music, art and culture;

- A display of the evolution

the Phuket Peranakan style of dress through the decades;

- A costume contest;
- Traditional cultural performances from the Imperial Courts presented by the cultural troupe from the Chinese province of Xian;

- A lion dance, a dragon procession and processions from the Chinese shrines;

- Shopping and food stalls.

For more information contact the TAT Region 4 Office at Tel: 076-212213, 076-217138 or Email: tatphuket@tat.or.th

February 3-5: The 8th Old Phuket Festival. The main focus of the annual festival will be on Thalang Rd, Soi Romanee and Krabi Rd.

Festival-goers will be able to enjoy local food, crafts and entertainment in celebration of Phuket City's history, people and culture.

Mayor Somjai Suwannasupana, said that the streets (*ngo ka kee*) around the historical commercial neighborhood featuring Sino-Portuguese architecture are a highlight of the Festival's attractions.

At 6:30pm on the Friday, there will be a parade, starting at

Jatujak Market, running along Phang Nga Rd past the Government Savings Bank, turning right to continue along Phuket Rd and then along Thalang Rd to Krabi Rd, ending at the Sino-Portuguese-style residence of the owner of The Metropole Hotel, Sithi Tandavanitj. There, the opening ceremony will follow.

At 11 pm, a light-and-sound show called "Phuket Rungruang Mungkung Yungyuen" ("To a Wealthy and Healthy Phuket") will take place at K. Sithi's residence.

During the three-day Festival, an exhibition on the Preservation and History of Sino-Portuguese Buildings will be held from 1 pm to 10:30 pm in a Municipality-owned Sino-Portuguese building at 63 Thalang Rd.

There will also be boating on Klong Bang Yai from 6 pm to 11 pm throughout the festival.

A ceremony dedicated to the Chinese goddess *Chao Mae Guan Im* will be held on Sunday, February 5, from 10:30 pm to midnight in Suan Chalermparkiat Park, opposite the Seng Ho Book Store.

For more information about the festivities, call the Phuket Municipality at Tel: 076-212196.

Rak Mak! Awards

This week's lucky numbers:

กจ 5728
ภูเก็ต

Black Isuzu D-Max

กвр 155
ภูเก็ต

Red Honda Wave 100

ชณ 2018
กรุงเทพฯ

Silver Isuzu

กจ 8645
ภูเก็ต

Dark Blue Isuzu

กจ 9037
ภูเก็ต

Silver Toyota

ฉท 4323
กรุงเทพฯ

Green Land Rover

The first three of these vehicles' owners to contact us can choose from the following three prizes: a one-hour refreshing spa for one at The Aspara Spa, at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket; or a laser tooth-whitening treatment at Promjai Dental Clinic at either their Patong Beach or bypass road clinic; or a facial treatment with Majestic Cosmetics at the Jungceylon Clinic.



Please contact the Gazette quickly to ensure you get the prize you want.

First come, first served!

Email: LovePhuket@PhuketGazette.Net, or call K. Pam at Tel: 076-236555.

Offers expire February 7, 2006.

Love Phuket? Put this sticker on your vehicle:



If we spot it, you could win a one-hour refreshing spa for two at The Aspara Spa, at the Holiday Inn Resort Phuket; or a spa package with 2 hours of relaxing at Layan Spa (Layan Beach Resort & Spa Village); or a facial treatment with Majestic Cosmetics at the Jungceylon Clinic.



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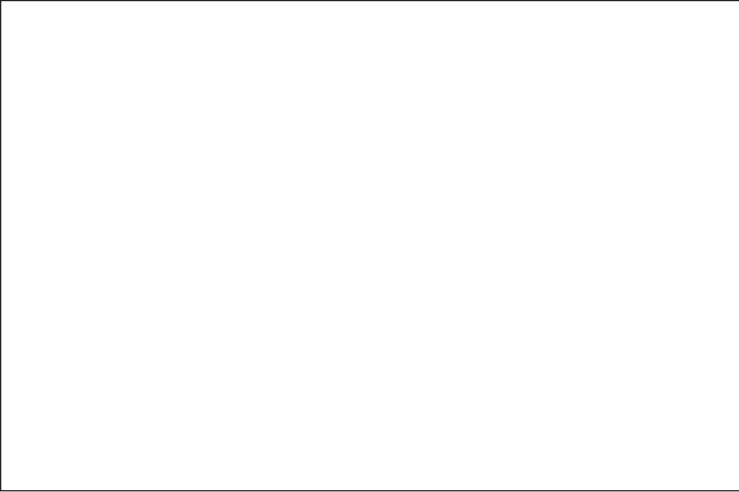
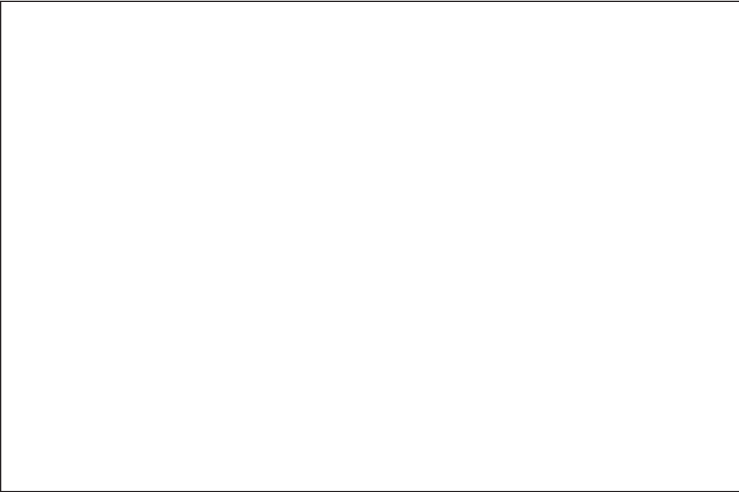
Puzzles

The Cryptic Crossword

Spot the Difference



Can you find the seven differences between the two cartoons below? And can you find them faster than the rest of the family?

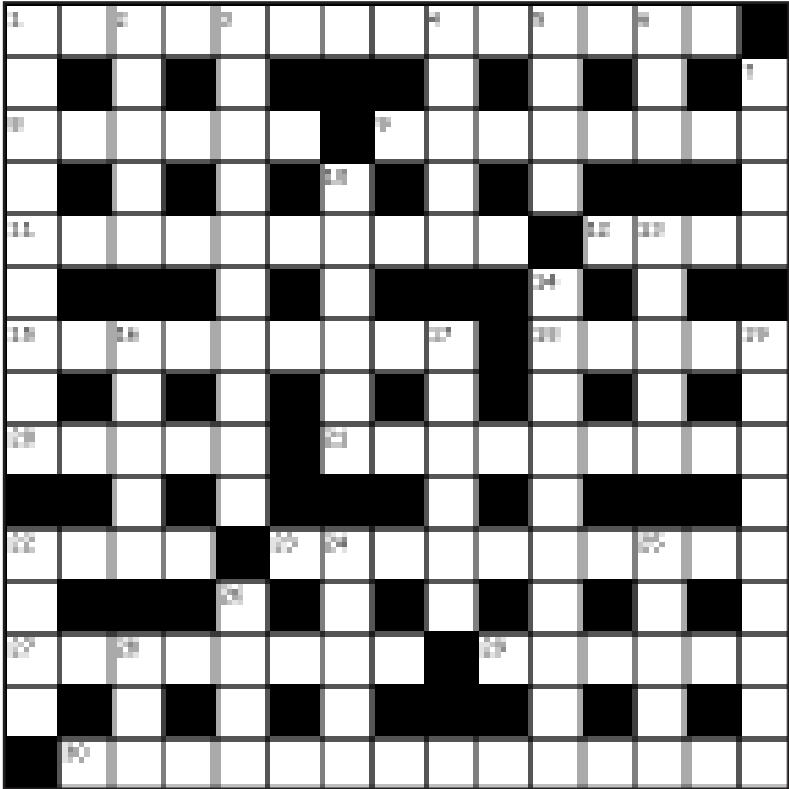


ACROSS

- 1. Betrayal! Natives tore rig to bits! (14)
- 8. New York river back in lax throat. (6)
- 9. Approve penalty. (8)
- 11. Strangely, I note Levi's box. (10)
- 12. Far from beautiful in thug lymph part. (4)
- 15. Set fire to Thai lass – and bolt! (9)
- 18. Away in Scotland? Quiet! It's flooded. (5)
- 20. Direct cattle. (5)
- 21. Difficult to be behind number sphere. (5,4)
- 22. Sounds like a pointer to corner of sail. (4)
- 23. He throws down the gauntlet to exploding spaceship. (10)
- 27. Sure it's the right terminal? (8)
- 29. Principality can go back into cow call. (6)
- 30. Charm may scatter vain set. (14)

DOWN

- 1. Such exaggerations are not for midgets. (4,5)
- 2. Agricultural right to



Compiled by Tortuus. © 2006

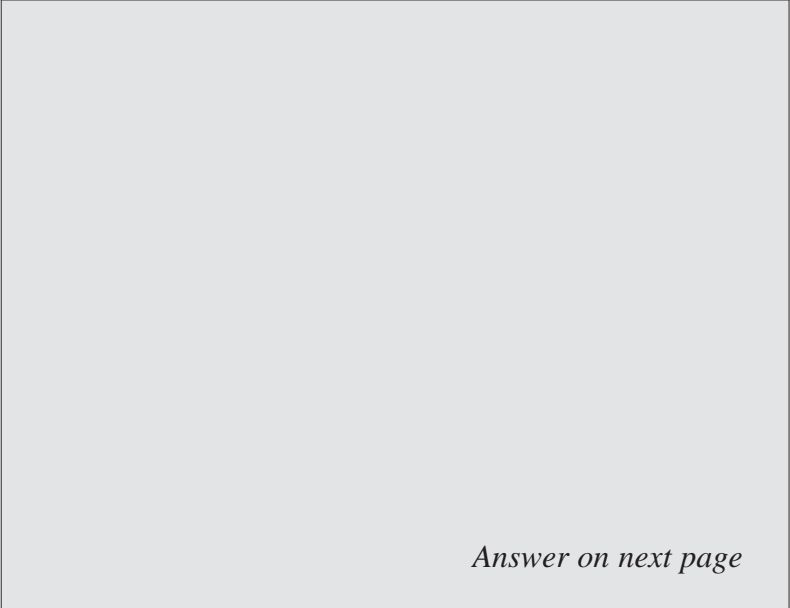
- 3. mountain range. (5)
- 3. In zero tax, or south to people with new ideas. (10)
- 4. Quiet! A knockout piece of headgear. (5)
- 5. Thanks to company for snack. (4)
- 6. "Oddly, I owe you, yes," says Marcel. (3)
- 7. Two points to five with affirmative jealousy. (4)
- 10. Want to reach a part of church. (6)
- 13. Farang with green skin. (5)
- 14. Fight French artist with badminton gear. (10)
- 16. Ogre beak holds bird. (5)
- 17. Silence. Note the French flock. (6)
- 19. Somehow, I hail ours: very funny! (9)
- 22. Limits hats. (4)
- 24. Put audio-visual in this Latin chaos. (5)
- 25. Sort the slope. (5)
- 26. Wake up in prison. (4)
- 28. Bend it into instruction to dog. (3)

Solution on page 22

Scribble Space



Brain Buster!



Answer on next page

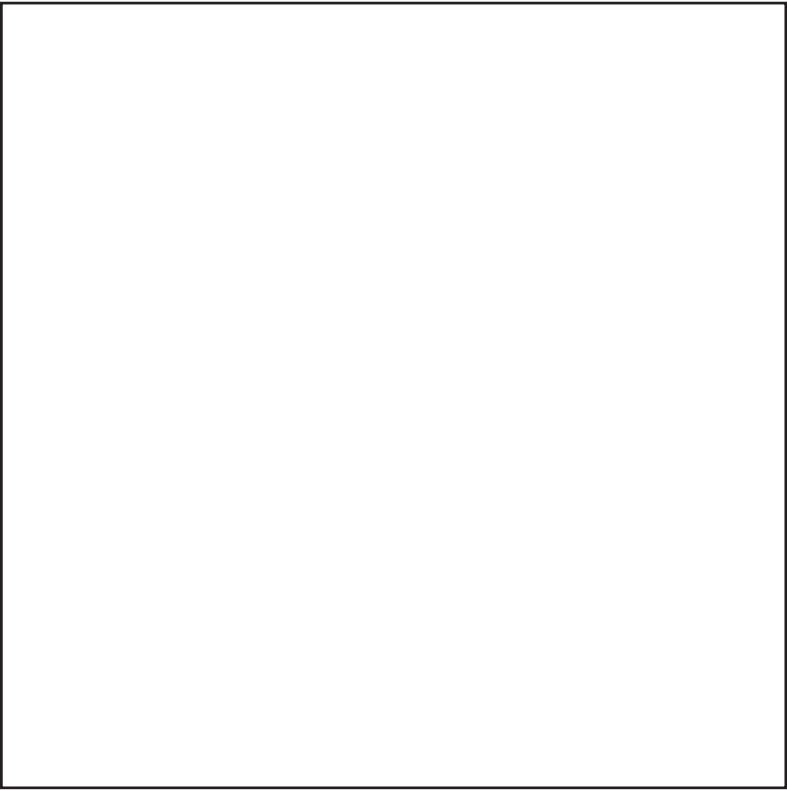
EZ TRIVIA

- 1. In what cartoon does monk Omi travel around the world to find ancient power objects that hold the key to attaining mar

su | do | ku
© Puzzles by Pappocom

Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

Sudoku is very simple: each row, each column and each "box" of nine squares within the puzzle must contain all the numbers from 1 to 9 with, naturally, no repetitions. Beware: there is only one solution to this puzzle, which is on the next page.

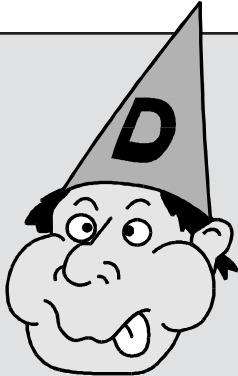


Quick Crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Self-centered.
- 7. Dutch cheese.
- 8. Be in a state close to sleeping

Get your brain in gear with The Monster Quiz



Kids! Ask Mum and Dad to help you find the answers to these questions. They're not easy but, if you do some research, you should be able to find the answers to all of them.

- 1. What rank in the US Air Force Reserve did actor James Stewart attain?
- 2. What type of aircraft did he last command, and where?
- 3. Who wrote *The Flight*

Puzzle Solutions

Brain Buster Solution

EZ Triva Answers

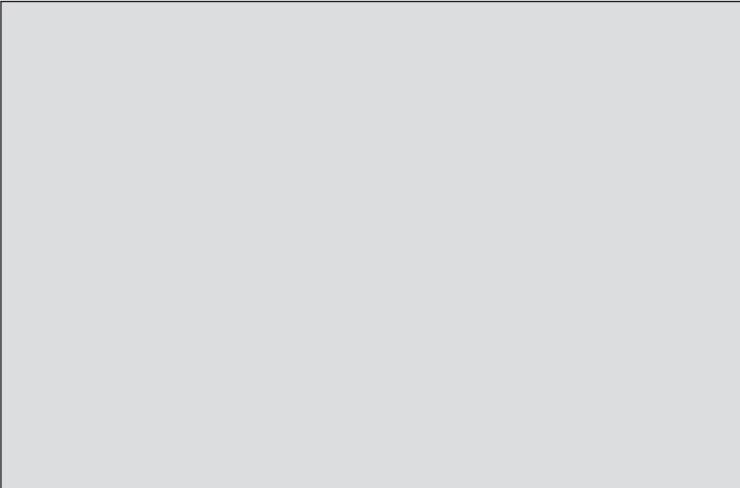
Save yourself a lot of time by just laughing off your friend's story. Every professionally made book has pages

1. Xiaolin Showdown; 2. Bird 'flu; 3. Thai

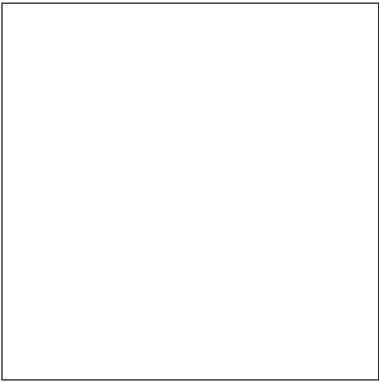
Monster Quiz Answers

1. Brigadier General; 2. A B-52 Stratofortress in the Vietnam War; 3. Elleston Trevor; 4. Adam Hall; 5. Ashlee Simpson;

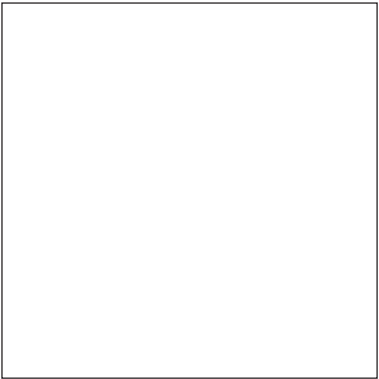
Solution to Cartoon Puzzle



Solution to this week's Cryptic Crossword



Solution to this week's Quick Crossword



Solution to this week's Sudoku puzzle

No rose-colored glasses: "I must also warn you... do not get into a fight or altercation, the police don't take kindly to anything that might reflect negatively on their tourist industry. Do not shoplift and keep all of your receipts. Buying, selling or using any illegal drugs can land you in a filthy Thai jail for a long, long time. It will cost you a fortune to fight the charges and even if you're successful, it will drag on for months. You will not be able to leave the country, as the police will have your passport and the local attorneys that you will be forced to deal with are a greedy group of flesh eating parasites. I met many people involved in huge court cases and many others waiting in extremely wretched jails." (1) Lis has a couple of quibbles: do the police really own the tourist industry? And where was the writer staying, the Bangkok Hilton?

Life on Mars: "The airport confectionary shops don't sell individual Mars bars – only huge multi-packs. Meanwhile, the airport cafés sell them for 65 baht each (\$1.66) – more than 3 times the street price. Going to Mars would be cheaper. My recommendation: Find 20 other passengers in a similar predicament and band together to buy the smallest available multi-pack. That way, you're only stuck with 10 Mars bars each... The [Bangkok] airport 'pharmacy' is, in fact, just another crappy bookshop with a few tubes of ointment under the counter. No condoms were on display and I'm far too shy to ask. If invited to join the mile-high club, I could be faced with a dilemma – the condom that I've had in my wallet since 1986 has probably perished by now. My recommendation: Pleasure your girl with a surplus Mars bar – but

Red Bulls and werewolves abound

OUTSIDE IN

By Lis Kinswoman

Hola muchachos y muchachas! This week we have hairy palms, life on Mars, loadsa Bangla sleaze and a 20-year-old condom. Yes, I know, I know... Lis spoils you all, but then again you deserve it! As our American cousins and graveyard bosses like to say, "dig it".

remember to keep the wrapper on. Only Mont Blanc pens are available at Bangkok airport – and they cost a month's salary. My recommendation: Hack off your little finger and then use the bloody stump to write... For reasons I don't fully understand, every shop in the terminal is stacked high with the bloody things [orchids]. My recommendation: Take the whole lot and turn your drab apartment into a tropical Shangri La." (2)

Death wish: "Having arrived at the airport I thought after my last couple of trips I'd play it safe and get a taxi to Patong rather than the bus. It seemed like a good idea at the time and then he started driving! Well at least I was going to go out in style as it was a Merc." (3)

Welcome to sleazy Bangla: "Every bar was full of Thai women all sitting with old and invariably ugly Western men, who may or may not have paid the aforementioned women to sit there with them. Each bar had a young Thai girl dancing around a pole (fully clothed to my annoyance) to some dreadful music whilst disgusting, lecherous old men leered at her with eyes that said 'I am going to pay to have sex with you later'. We almost ran to the end of the complex to avoid any more women grabbing me and urging me to drink in their bar until we came to a bar that seemed (only slightly) more normal than the rest. It even boasted two young English men that didn't seem to have any Thai women hanging off them paid or otherwise. I ordered a beer and Libby decided upon a Pina Colada.

"It was when the cocktail arrived in a glass that looked like a naked women that the alarm bells began to sound. It became apparent that the young English men were proteges of some kind of the old, fat and ugly English men that were sitting on the other side of the bar, each with their own Thai lady. They even engaged me in conversation going so far as to introduce me to a couple of the ever present Thai women. I stared at Libby and we made a silent pact to drink up as fast as possible (there is no situation so dire that a good beer should be wasted) and leave the 'entertainment complex' never to return. The whole place made me nauseous and I was disgusted with the western men that seemed oblivious to their own pathetic

existences. I have no doubt that retired divorcees need to find something to fill a void in their life, although I find this particular method somewhat repulsive." (4)

Bull-baiting? Last week we had a contributor ask, "Is Phuket the Transylvania of Asia?" Well, according to the following, it would seem so. "We are werewolves in Thailand, waiting anxiously for the full moon to issue in the wild. During high season, it's said that the Full Moon Party in Haadrin, on the southern tip of Ko Phangan, draws ten thousand revelers. This is the low season, and still a few thousand are expected. Already scary bass notes are rolling in off the sand and making my bungalow feel structurally unsound. When do my palms grow hair? ... The preferred way to stay awake throughout the night, in Thailand, is to drink a small bottle of Red Bull. This liquid, available at pharmacies and bars (nice pairing, that), is what the taxi drivers and bar girls drink. It's why cab drivers in Bangkok tend to have nervous tics – if you see them swatting non-existent flies, it's probably the Red Bull." (5)

1. http://www.travelersdigest.com/phuket_review.htm
2. http://www.mangosauce.com/travel/bangkok_airport_condom_challenge.php
3. <http://www.travelblog.org/Asia/Thailand/Phuket/Patong-Beach/blog-31141.html>
4. <http://adamlibby.blogspot.com/>
5. <http://dysmedia.com/Words/Rave.htm>

This is the third book by Jerry Hopkins that I've reviewed in a year. More astounding than his energy is the quality of his work. *Bangkok Babylon* (Periplus, Singapore, 2005, 224pp) is the best of the three and stems from a simple, obvious premise: Bangkok is home to an amazing array of long-term expatriates. All Jerry had to do was interview them and write down their stories. The result is a collection of 26 fascinating profiles.

There's Tony Poe and Jack Shirley of CIA fame, the photographers Shrimp and John Everingham, slum priest Joe Maier, Phuket's sea canoe pioneer John Gray, crusading lawyer George Cooper, elephant expert Richard Lair, nightlife columnist Bernard Trink, Academy Award-winning screenwriter Sterling Silliphant, pianist and convicted pedophile Eric Rosser, restaurant owners Mark Parr and Duncan Kilburn, gem dealer Richard Diran, Q Bar owner David Jacobson, "Dean of Expat Writers" William Warren, adventurer Harold Stephens, rock musician Rick Montembault, Lonely Planetter Joe Cummings, English teacher John Quincannon, ethnographic collector and thriller writer Jason Schoon-over... There's also a profile of himself. And me.

I've known Jerry Hopkins since shortly after he arrived to live in Bangkok over a decade ago. I was associate editor of *Manager Magazine* and he was a frequent freelance contributor, after a long journalistic career including a pioneering stint at



Off the SHELF

By James Eckardt

Rolling Stone. Like many others profiled for his book, I became a friend and drinking buddy.

I can testify first hand to the thoroughness of Jerry's research. We had two long interview sessions at his kitchen table and he read two of my early books to bone up on biographical details. The result is both insightful and funny. He both pokes fun at me and pats me on the head. He has followed this methodology for almost all of his interviewees, many of whom are friends or at least acquaintances. His few profiles of people he has not met – Trink, Rosser – are less successful.

As he indicates in his profile of bar owners Big Steve and Little Steve, his local is the Three Roses Bar on the second floor of the Nana Entertainment Plaza. From his barstool perch, he surveys Bangkok with a knowing eye.

"The phrase 'wild, wild east' is a cliché, yet it is both reasonable and accurate when applied to what is, undeniably, one of the great, unruly and untamed cities in the world. Bangkok is Y-chromosome territory, a city where surprise is as ordinary as bad air

The old boys' club

and traffic jams and pretty, young women and rice; where accessibility and affordability accompany anything you want, even unleashed fantasy. Sex, drugs, counterfeit designer goods and software, smuggled gems, weapons, endangered species... Thailand is Southeast Asia's prime marketplace. It's not surprising that such an environment has appeal for some of what society deems the best and the worst. Missionaries and NGOs come to fix the 'problem'. Others come to roll around in it."

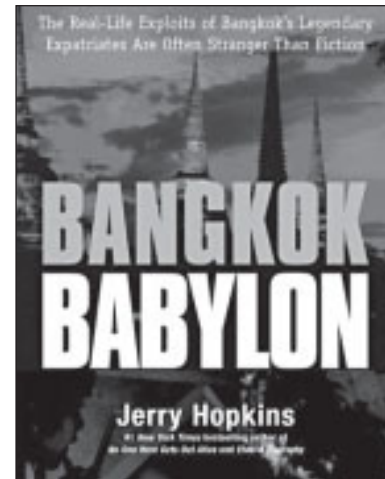
Jerry admits that in his selection of profiles there is a disproportionate number of Americans and media types, since they were selected by an American writer, but they have much in common with the larger expat community.

"Nearly all are long-timers and most have become disaffiliated from their home countries, many to the point of feeling like an alien when they return for a visit," he writes. "Usually, things back home have changed... and in every case the expat has altered his psychology, if not his chemistry. And almost always,

apparently quite comfortably."

Another thing they have in common is age. At 38, rock musician Rick Montembault of the band Flow, is the baby of the group. Most are in their 50s and 60s and came to Thailand during the Vietnam War era.

Jerry adds a final speculation: "Perhaps the 'dinosaurs' – a word used by several of the subjects here profiled – are or were just that, outsized creatures from another time, whose heirs and successors will be lizards and, at the largest, crocodiles. No slur intended, of course. But this book may be a celebration of a part of Southeast Asia that is sliding into the past, along with clean air and the klongs and many of the ancient mores and practices."



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A sensitivity test for men

Recently a handbook was published in an effort to improve communication between the sexes. It listed three questions that women should never ask men, on the grounds that men won't understand the logic.

Being famous for my caring, sharing, touchy-feely personality, my deep sensitivity and my uncanny ability to empathize with women, I studied the three questions carefully – and came to the happy conclusion that women may ask them after all.

Don't worry about the logic. Men don't expect logic from women. And we are skilled at responding to any question women may ask, no matter how stupid, with artful bullpoo.

I have devised a test based on those three questions, which I urge all male readers to take if they are concerned about their sensitivity skills. Women will be able to judge the caliber of their stud of choice by evaluating his answers. There's an answer key at the end – no peeking!

1. Would you still love me if I were fatter and uglier?

a. Darling! I would love you even if you were hog-fat and dog-ugly. My love for you is not dependent on the fickle foibles of fleeting flesh. Nay, my precious jewel: it strikes far deeper than that. It embraces your very soul, for I love with a transcendent passion the very warp and woof of your celestial being. Beloved one! My love for you is unchanging and eternal; it cannot in any way be stayed or swayed, diluted or diminished, by the ravages which ruthless time inflicts upon inconstant flesh.

b. Honey, I love you just the way you are, but if you get fat and ugly, I'll love you just as much, I guess, probably, quite likely, all things considered.

c. Well, dear, that depends. I mean, just how fat and ugly are we talking here?

d. You get fat and ugly, bitch, and I'm outta here.

2. Why do you love me?

a. Oh! My sweet darling! How can you ask such a question? I love you, quite sim-

ply, because you are you. Every atom of your being is priceless to me, thou cherished treasure of my adoring heart, for 'tis the essential yoness of you that I worship. Yes: I love the yoness of your you-you. So long as you are you, so long will my immortal love for you hold firm; yea, and wax yet stronger, even beyond the end of time.

b. Well, you are beautiful, babe. (Mr Conciseness, here.)

c. Uhhhhh... let's see. Hm! That's a good question. Gee, let me go get a beer and think about this for a while.

d. Love you? Who said I love you? Get me a beer, bitch, and stop sniveling.

3. What are you thinking?

a. Oh! Darling! I'm thinking of how much I love you, and how beautiful you are, and how our coming together was graciously ordained by a beneficent Deity. I never want my thoughts to stray from the beauty of your being.

b. We got a pretty good thing going here, and we probably ought to keep it going.

c. I'm thinking of going over and chatting up that chick over there who's been eyeballing me.

d. Thinking? I'm not thinking. I'm plotting. Plotting how to dump you, bitch, unless you get out to the fridge and get me a beer right now.

Answer key: Give yourself four points for each (a) answer, three points for each (b) answer, two points for each (c) answer, and one point for each (d) answer.

1. 11-12 points: You are a slick-tongued, sweet-mouthed Romeo, and probably a devil with the women. Might want to work on your honesty a bit, though.

2. 8-10 points: You're a loving guy, but much too laconic. Work on those speaking skills; be more romantic. Buy a book of love poetry and memorize it. We recommend *The Go Go Dancer Who Stole My Viagra*, by Dean Barrett.

3. 5-7 points: You are too wishy-washy and indecisive. Gotta beef up those commitment skills.

4. 3-4 points: You are a real dinosaur. You make Piltown Man look like Beau Brummel. How have you managed to survive into the 21st century? Your kind should have become extinct ages ago. We recommend immediate suicide to relieve the earth of your polluting presence.

S. Tsow can be flamed at stsow@yahoo.com, if he survives the brickbats thrown at him for writing this scurrilous screed.

Although building on a scale not seen since the Chinese commenced a garden wall to keep out the neighbors is perhaps the most noticeable change in Pattaya, one of the more amazing developments in the first years of the new millennium has been the amount of literature pertaining to, or mentioning, Fun Town.

The town's bookshelves are presently groaning like an underpaid short-timer with the weight of this literature. Of course, when I say "literature" I am using the word in its broadest meaning. There are a few titles which in no way could pass a standard litmus test as it pertains to literature.

Bookshops, both for new and used titles, have been one of the growth industries in Pattaya. Go back to the early 1990s and this writer can recall only two bookshops in the city: DK in Soi Post Office and Bookazine in Royal Garden. Since then, this pair have been joined by two more Bookazine stores, B2S, DK in

A future classic

I'm head down and buttocks skywards...

Central Pattaya Road, and an Asia Books franchise in Soi Post Office. There are also second-hand bookshops above Tops Supermarket, in Soi Chaiyaphum and two in Soi Buakhaw.

The books' titles are generally pretty straightforward affairs giving the potential reader an idea of the subject matter contained therein. My friend Neil Hutchison wrote *Money Number One*. Subtitled *The Single Man's Survival Guide to Pattaya*, it's pretty obvious he's not dealing with fiduciary matters as they relate to the Central Bank of Thailand.

My own book, *Pattaya: Patpong on Steroids*, has absolutely nothing to do with medical conditions, unless the wisdom of

running a bar in Pattaya is questioned.

Graham Greene spent time in Southeast Asia, but Pattaya was still an unspoiled beach with not a hotel in sight when he was traipsing about the region. A quick search through his book titles reveal a number that would appear appropriate for the Pattaya experience.

Consider, *The Quiet American* (does such a creature truly exist? Then again, the same could be said of Germans, Brits and Australians); *The End of the Affair* (is it still called an 'affair' if the whole exercise lasts just over an hour in a bar on Soi 6?); *The Tenth Man* (well, she's only been in Pattaya two months); *Mornings in the Dark* (doing just what precisely?); and *An Impossible Woman* (pick a bar, any bar).

Imagine the likes of "Papa" Hemingway coming to Pattaya, circa 2006.

He would have found big game fishing, but it would have been land-based and involving two-legged creatures who could make a white pointer seem tame.

Bullfighting would have been nothing more than dodging the importuning lady-boys at the upper end of the Beach Road Promenade.

Perhaps he was way ahead of his time because Hemingway's most famous book titles could all be Pattaya publications.

For Whom the Bell Tolls would not have been a classic tale about the Spanish Civil War, instead it would have centered around the trials and tribulations of a go-go bar owner in Walking Street and his pitiful attempts at enticing customers to buy a round for everybody in the bar.

To Have and Have Not is a love story, but were it set in Pattaya it would tell of a man who falls for a lithe dancer, but after just one night of passion he is unable to arrange a reprise because she's always "off".

In *The Torrents of Spring* a man arrives in Pattaya after five years without sex. It's springtime...the torrents I don't think need graphic explanation.

Hemingway blew his brains out at the age of 61. Had he been here in Pattaya he would doubtless have joined the ever-growing condo-leaper's club rather than create the sort of mess on the bathroom tiles caused by a shotgun.

Then there are books with unusual titles. Each year as printing presses across the planet churn out the collected jottings of literally thousands of writers, some titles just leap out.

The Joy of Chickens, released in 1980, and the 1978 publication, *Proceedings of the Second International Workshop on Nude Mice*, are surely topped by the 1990 *Lesbian Sodomasochism Safety Manual* and the 1986



FROM THE STREETS OF PATTAYA

By Duncan Stearn

Oral Sadism and the Vegetarian Personality.

The latter, apparently, has a chapter dealing with aberrant uses of a carrot.

Many of the mammillary-challenged damsels of Pattaya's bar scene might well be interested in the 1985 tome *Natural Bust Enlargement with Total Power: How to Increase the Other 90 percent of Your Mind to Increase the Size of Your Breasts*. Now that's more than the proverbial mouthful.

How-to books always seem to be good sellers. Two of my favorite titles are *How to Shit in the Woods: An Environmentally Sound Approach to a Lost Art* and *How to Avoid Huge Ships*; for some reason this makes me think of PJ O'Rourke's thoughts concerning nautical transportation: "There are lots of mysterious things about boats, such as why one would get on one voluntarily."

In case you're wondering, I'm currently head down and buttocks skywards writing my new tome with the working title *How to Prevent Losing Your Shirt and Other Apparel in a Bar in Pattaya*. I may subtitle it *An Expert's Guide*.



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❖ Translations

In The Stars

by Isla Star

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Time is running out if you are dithering over whether or not to embark on a new business arrangement. Someone is about to lose their patience and search elsewhere for a partner. You need to go with your basic instinct regarding this matter. This weekend you are expected to be in more than one place at the same time. A short visit to both destinations is recommended.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): A mistake made late last year is about to catch up with you. Look out for a sensible Sagittarian friend who has had a similar experience recently, and who will be able to give good advice. Romance that is not nourished will flounder on the rocks. The number 7 can bring good fortune on Tuesday.

ARIES (March 21-April 20): Donating too much of your precious time to those who are less accomplished will result in personal matters being ignored. Be sure to double-check important appointments, particularly on Wednesday and Thursday when confusion is highlighted. Romance and work threaten to become entwined when a colleague makes very obvious suggestions.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): A week of tying up loose ends lies ahead. Take time out this weekend to list all unfinished business and create a realistic timetable for the days ahead. A last-minute commitment midweek will involve more input than you would like, but the results will be more than worthwhile. Those impatient for a romantic interlude won't have long to wait as February promises to bring more than one interesting meeting.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): Sweating the small stuff threatens to deplete vital energy for Geminis. Keep your sights firmly set on the big picture and delegate minor tasks to others. Words spoken in the heat of the moment on Monday could have lasting impact on a business relationship. Maintain a cool distance until you have all the facts. This could be a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): Short-term financial prospects could be affected by misplacing important documents. Direct your energy into organizing paperwork this weekend, even if it means missing out on a tempting social outing. Your tendency to sidestep burning issues will land you in hot water where romance is concerned; face up to the facts to avoid this happening. The color pearl pink can encourage a more tranquil state of mind.

LEO (July 24-August 22): If you want to move forward, prepare to let go of beliefs you've held for a long time. February will offer an exciting challenge to Leos, but you won't be able to rise to the occasion unless there's a change in your outlook. It's likely that you've realized that dealing with one particular business contact wasted a lot of valuable energy last year. Slowly distance yourself from this person in order to maintain a civil relationship.

VIRGO (August 23-September 23): Virgoans who were content to drift through life last year with no particular goals in sight will be feeling more driven by now. This year will be one of the most productive yet, but you need to streamline ambitions. If traveling more was one of your New Year's resolutions, make contact with acquaintances from the past. An invitation to visit a far-off land should result. The number 5 is lucky on Monday.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): Doing good deeds enhances your feel-good factor this week. Librans who know they've been somewhat self-centered lately will have ample opportunity to compensate for this in February. A love that was lost in the middle of last year is about to make a return appearance. For those now in another relationship, this is certain to put the cat among the pigeons. The color emerald green helps you to see things more clearly.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): You will be in a negative mood as January draws to a close. Don't be surprised if others keep their distance; they won't be interested in hearing your gloomy stories. A wind of positive change midweek will make you wonder why you couldn't look on the bright side. Pisces is ready to make amends for a recent mistake – accept this in the spirit in which it is offered.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Your chances of progress at work are starting to look more promising. However, there is one more stumbling block to be negotiated and this should appear before the first week of February draws to a close. Sagittarians who aren't sure how to deal with this dilemma should seek the advice of a Capricorn. Delayed mail should arrive before the end of next week.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): The stars are smiling on your efforts at self-improvement. Those who have been making a serious effort to stick to their New Year's resolutions will reap rewards. As compliments come flooding in, so do romantic propositions. A relationship with Aries looks most promising if you are interested in long-term commitment. Scorpio is only looking for light-hearted fun in the sun. The number 2 is lucky on Sunday.

Something about a roundabout

I'm probably not the only person in Phuket who notices differences between driving habits and etiquette in different countries – indeed, even in different parts of the same country.

Here in Phuket, there seem to be a lot of bad habits and an almost total lack of etiquette. Certain sections of Phuket's roads seem to bring out the disparities among Phuket drivers' skills.

There's not much doubt that the roundabout at the Heroines' Monument doesn't really function successfully.

Nobody seems to notice that it is a roundabout; people don't drive around it, they drive through it.

This becomes especially noticeable if you find yourself driving from east to west on the island, thereby crossing the main road at the roundabout.

In many countries, probably with the exception of the Middle

East, Italy and France, the accepted rule is that the vehicle already on the roundabout has right of way.

Here, this rule doesn't seem to apply when I'm entering the roundabout from the west.

Even if I'm half way across, vehicles coming from Phuket City will bear down from 100 yards away from the roundabout, with lights flashing, horns blaring, exhibiting a general attitude of beligerence, clearly suggesting that I have no right attempting to enter the roundabout at all.

Traffic lights were installed there some time ago. But apart from flashing orange, they don't

seem to ever have been used to control traffic.

The only time that I can safely attempt a western entry to the roundabout is when the policeman leaves his box and decides to take control of the general melée.

I have reached the conclusion that the Heroines' Monument roundabout is treated as a normal intersection where you are expected to give way to your right. This explains the difficulty of the western approach, where the traffic coming from the south is both on the right and on the main road.

Having worked out that the rule of giving way to the right applies at Heroines' Monument gives some sort of clue as to how to approach the situation, unlike at Chalong Circle and The Metropole hotel roundabouts, where incomprehensible chaos reigns.

LARGER
THAN
LIFE

By Graham Doven

Organizers Reveal Mystery Of Missing Food At World's Longest Beach Buffet

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of January, 1996

PHUKET TOWN: After the longest beach buffet in the world was laid to rest, the directors of the Song Serm Tong Tiao Jungwat Phuket, or Tourist Business Improvement Board, met at the Merlin Hotel, on December 12, to discuss the results of the record-breaking feast. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Governor Tiraboon Pobukdi, and among those in attendance was Iam Thavornvongse, member of the the Phuket Chamber of Commerce's Fixed Assets Development Committee.

Khun Iam told reporters that problems arose because the number of tickets sold to the event was about 10,000; but nearly 40,000 people were at the buffet, resulting in the food prepared in advance being long gone before the event was finished.

"But be that as it may," he said, "those who purchased tick-

ets and hadn't the chance to eat were nevertheless in sympathy with – and still a part of – the feast, which was held in honor of, and to celebrate, our King. We received very few tickets back – no more than 10."

Assistant village chief gunned down

From the Phuket Gazette, issue of January 15-31, 2001

KRABI: An assistant poo yai baan (village chief) in Tambon Kao Panom, was gunned down late last month after he got into a fight with the owner of a rubber plantation.

Police told the *Gazette* that Jamikon Sung-rod, 25, shot Chob "Yam" Nuan-on, 36, during a fight in the Kao Tong restaurant, which is on the road from Kao Panom to Nuer Klong.

After the shooting, Jamikon went straight to the police station and surrendered.

THE TIME
machine

News from the past

Khun Iam went on to explain that T-shirts and commemorative plates would be sold as souvenirs by the participating hotels during the holiday season.

Police went to the restaurant and found Chob lying face down, with a single bullet hole through his chest.

Jamikon told police that Chob was already in the restaurant when he and his 27-year-old brother, Aniwat, arrived.

Aniwat and Chob had argued in the past, Jamikon said, and Aniwat, being smaller, had been beaten up.

On this occasion, too, according to the police, Chob started to hit Aniwat. Fearing that his brother would be badly beaten again, Jamikon shot Chob with a 9mm handgun.

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THAI's approach is very short-sighted

Last week, Juthamas Siriwan, Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, pledged to help tourism in Phuket by pushing Thai Airways International (THAI) to increase the number of direct international flights to Phuket, especially from Hong Kong, Australia and Japan.

She will have her work cut out for her. This week, THAI announced that, far from increasing direct international flights, it plans to ax its remaining direct flights from Australia because they are losing too much money.

THAI argues that it put the flights on only to help the tsunami-stricken parts of the country, particularly Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi. But those with memories that stretch back a little further than last week will recall that it took considerable pressure to get THAI to do this – it was not done willingly. Initially, the airline seemed to take the attitude that Phuket and the surrounding area had been wiped off the map, and simply bailed out.

As a result of the airline's super-cautious approach to business, we now have a situation whereby tour agents overseas have trouble booking tourists onto increasingly scarce flights, and THAI is not providing flights because the agents are not booking people onto them. THAI apparently wants guarantees that, if it lays on new services or revives old ones, the seats will be filled.

That is the same as the *Gazette* announcing that it will publish a newspaper only if it can first have guarantees that there will be enough advertising to ensure a profit.

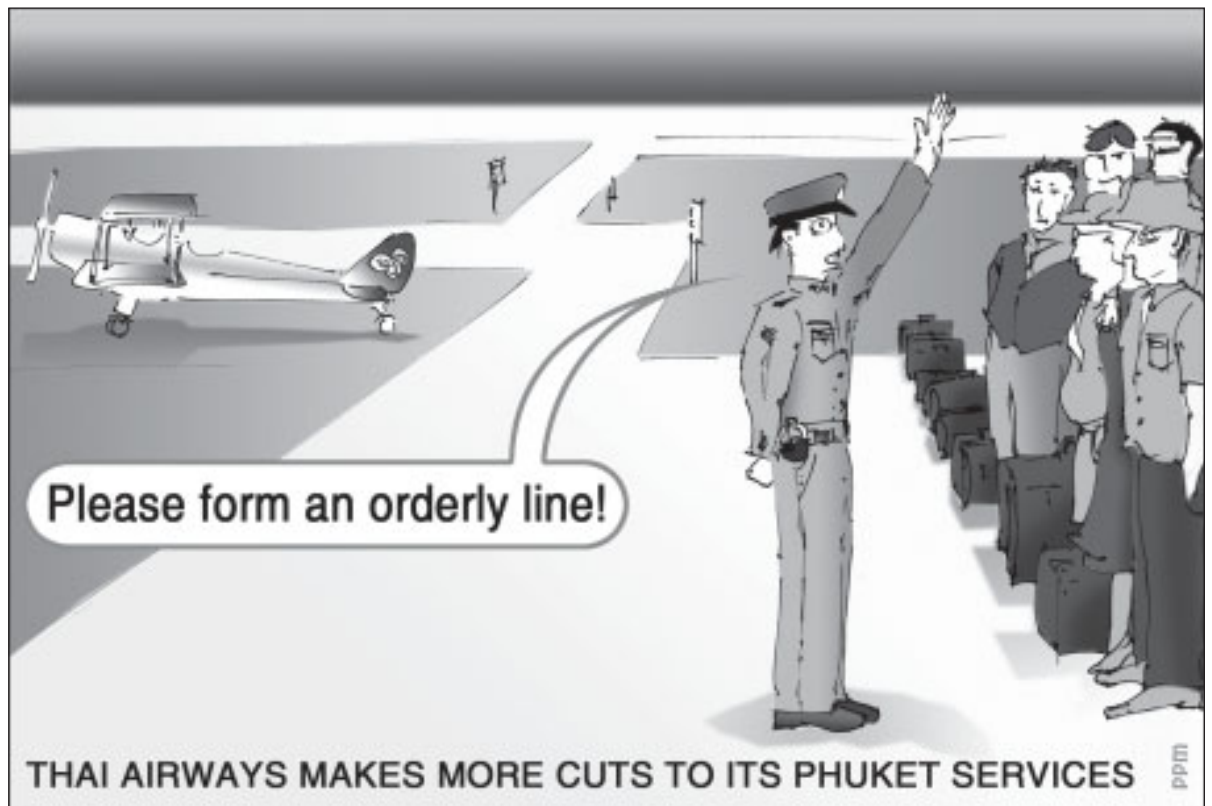
The big difference (apart from size, of course) is that THAI, although a listed company, is still very firmly a state enterprise. Any losses it incurs are likely to be covered, eventually, by the government – and that means by the taxpayers.

Phuket pays more taxes than most. Should it not expect to see some sort of return from THAI? Apparently not. Instead, THAI seems to have decided that its best course of action is to cut services and hike prices; it raised its fares in June, again in August and yet again in October.

Now a flight from Bangkok to Krabi costs more than a flight from Singapore to Krabi.

With these conditions and this kind of thinking prevailing in THAI's corridors of power, the *Gazette* wishes K. Juthamas the very best of luck.

– The Editor



Letters

The *Gazette* is pleased to receive mail from readers. Please write to us at 367/2 Yaowarat Rd, Amphur Muang, Phuket 83000, fax to 076-213971 or send an email to editor@phuketgazette.net

with your views for publication in our next issue. We reserve the right to edit all letters. Pseudonyms are acceptable only if your full name and address are supplied.

The decent thing

I see Thai women wearing hot pants and halter tops every day, and I have also seen a number of Thai women topless – usually while bathing or relaxing near their homes. I have also seen many men and women urinate in public. The women hide it well, but the men just don't seem to care; they just let it all hang out.

So I have a question: just what is considered decent, and what is "indecent", in Thailand? After all, in the West, urinating in public is considered indecent – but going topless or nude at the beach is not.

According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, "Women should never go topless, or in shorts, hot pants or other unsuitable attire". In the *Gazette* of January 5, 2004, I read, "I see more and more tourists bathing topless on Patong Beach. Is this legal?" and the answer from Pol Lt Col Panudech Sukwong, Superintendent, Phuket Tourist Police, was, "Section 388 of the Penal Code of Thailand states, 'Whoever does any shameful act in public by indecently exposing his or her person, or by committing another indecent act, shall be punished with a fine not exceeding 500 baht.' However, we have never charged any tourist with this because Phuket is a tourist destination."

At Thailand.com we can find the following: "Going topless or nude at the beach (or anywhere else) is seen as disrespectful to the local people. It's also illegal." And in *The Nation*, "100 years ago all of these Thai ladies were wandering around topless anyway. God, we are such short-memoried hypocrites!"

So where is the line? Is nudity obscene? If so, why is it ignored? Is going topless disrespectful? Are hot pants unsuitable attire? Why do foreigners run around naked at Full Moon parties? Clue: "full moon" is a euphemism for a bare bottom.

Michael Weldon
Udon Thani

Visa run horror

On January 8, I drove to Ranong to cross to Burma to renew my Thai visa. Despite living for many years in the Middle East helping abused and starving dogs, nothing prepared me for the horrors around the immigration office that is stationed just off the shore of Burma.

There I saw at least half a dozen dogs that seemed stranded and so starved and sick that some must be beyond helping. There was already a decaying carcass on the sand. If these dogs had been sterilized they would not have been able to increase in numbers, and this problem would not be ongoing. Not speaking Thai or Burmese, and feeling very vulnerable in an unfamiliar place, I had to turn my back on them and return to Phuket.

I have contacted the Soi Dog Foundation (SDF). Its staff expressed great concern and suggested that anyone doing that particular visa run could take food for these poor animals.

This is by no means a long-term solution. Perhaps, as the SDF also suggested, there could be an initiative to collect these dogs, bring them to Phuket, and the appropriate decisions for their welfare could be made; those sterilized and healthy would subsequently be returned. The SDF is willing to do the work in Phuket.

Anyone with ideas or time to help could contact the SDF and work together to find a way to help end these animals' suffering.

Name & address supplied
Kamala

Law – Texas style

After enjoying Thai culture at first hand, I have noticed many instances in which foreigners have complained about Thai laws and rules. But I think the Thai rules are very wise, and all foreigners should stop complaining about them. If they disagree so much, they can stay at home. The Thais know what works for them better than anyone else.

In a previous issue of the *Gazette*, a foreigner was complaining about motorbikes crossing over the line in front of cars and going straight in a right-hand lane when they should be turning right. The Thai official who responded to the complaint said that sometimes these drivers do get penalized. Also, these drivers are just trying to get from point A to point B, and aren't thinking about the rules. The police there at the time during rush hour are just trying to keep the traffic flowing properly. I have to agree with his answer totally.

Steven Thurman
Amarillo, Texas, US

Hidden calories

I notice on the ubiquitous yellow signs promoting the 8th Old Phuket Town Festival the following: "Enjoy unseen local dishes and traditional sweets."

I would urge dieters not to heed this latest tourism promotion: it sounds like there are a lot of "hidden calories" involved.

S. Huasaikul
Samkong

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Letters conveying views and suggestions are published here. Those seeking comment from government officials or business owners are published as *Issues & Answers* on the facing page.

MUST TRY HARDER

It's a long time since I've seen *The Wizard of Oz*, but I seem to recall that somewhere towards the end Toto pulls back a curtain to reveal that everything is not as it's cracked up to be in this wonderful wonderland. In fact, it's a sham.

And every time I land in Phuket, or fly out (having paid 500 baht for the privilege), I get a similar feeling, quite distinct from the one about not being in Kansas any more.

Here is the gateway to the "Pearl of the Andaman Sea", so just why does it seem like a warehouse with a runway?

If you accept that Phuket encapsulates the very best of Thailand, then you'd expect its main point of entry to reflect as much.

Thai cuisine is famed around the world, but the simplest food stall on the beach does a better job than any of the food outlets I've sampled at the airport.

Likewise, and I find myself adopting a fixed grin when I type this: "Land of Smiles". Has anyone ever ventured to suggest to the lumpen posse of old grumps at Immigration that they might offer a tad more in the way of a welcome?

The general level of pricing (email at 150 baht per hour?!) is outrageous, the souvenir shops pedestrian, and the general standard of architecture the product of someone who not only can't think outside the box, but is obviously confined inside one too.

Contrast this with the country's repu-

FIRST PERSON

As a travel journalist, *Gazette* contributor Ed Peters sees more airports in a month than most people can expect to see in a lifetime. Here he takes a look at Phuket International Airport – most people's first experience of the island – and wonders whether it makes the right kind of impression on visitors.



tation for good value, imaginative shopping and stunning traditional design.

Numerous column inches have been devoted to the ground transport situation in the past. I've cudgled my brains without success to think of a Third World country airport that doesn't have some sort of bus service. Is organizing something like this really difficult? Would doing so condemn so very many limousine drivers to Skid Row?

Let's face it. Phuket International is a scruffy, tawdry, third-rate, manky eyesore – everything that it shouldn't be and quite a bit more.

Hop over to Samui, and you get a

low-rise charmer. Flip down to Singapore and the stores at Changi guarantee your money back in 30 days if you can find what you bought there cheaper downtown. The staff at Mascot in Sydney exhibit a cheery deference 24/7.

I won't try and calculate the annual number of departing passengers multiplied by 500 [baht], because I failed maths 'O' level twice. And I won't suggest tearing the whole place down and starting again, because that's happening all over the island anyway.

But let's assume that the airport has a certain amount of income to finance a renovation. Instead of viewing the place

as somewhere to gouge passengers, why not – apart from getting aircraft in and out safely – treat the airport as a showcase, making it a tourist attraction in itself? I recall being met by traditional musicians and dancers in the wee hours in Tahiti, and on another occasion a German functionary extolled the wonders of the interior design of Munich's new terminal to me.

Why can't the airport host a gourmet restaurant – as well as a couple of cheap and cheerful buffets and snack shops – instead of yet another ersatz pub? There's nothing so depressing as the cloying stench of fast food.

Couldn't Banyan Tree or someone similar open a day spa here? Rather than parking yourself in front of a blathering television in a seat designed for hunchbacks you could book in for a 30-minute facial.

And if any builders on the island are looking for landfill, there are truckloads of tacky mementos cluttering airside.

What's more, the airport is right by the sea, but you'd be forgiven for thinking it was stuck far inland. You don't need to be able to spell "aesthetics" to twig that a bar or café or just somewhere to chill is a much better place if there's a view.

Guidebooks to places like Singapore and Samui devote long paragraphs to the wonders of the islands' airports. To achieve the same for Phuket would not require rocket science – just some gumption and a modicum of pride. And then we could all set off into the sunset, singing *Follow the Yellow Brick Road*.

Can someone please switch off the village loudspeakers?

I have been living in a tranquil housing estate in Thalang for over seven years. It was a pleasant place to live until about a month ago when, about 100 meters from my house, someone erected a tower with four loudspeakers on top of it.

Every day since then, including Sundays, at seven am, these speakers blast out Radio Thailand for one full hour. Sleep is impossible thanks to the volume of this broadcast, and the poor quality of sound is offensive and an intrusion on the privacy of every person living nearby.

I have no wish to listen to this particular radio station; nor do those Thai neighbors to whom I have mentioned it.

One of my neighbors has just lost the sale of his house because of the noise. Another lost his rental tenant, who left to find a place where his peace and quiet are respected.

Meanwhile, my next-door neighbor is consulting his lawyer about issuing a civil lawsuit to cover loss of income from lost rental contracts due to the dreadful din caused by the speakers.

These loudspeakers do not belong on a modern international

resort island anywhere in the world, let alone in a peaceful country like Thailand.

Please, can we get rid of them so we can have some quiet and enjoy the news of our own selection?

Sleepless
Thepkasattri

Jatupon Wechapun Public Works Engineer of Thepkasattri Municipality replies,

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. I cannot dismantle the tower or speakers as these belong to the municipality, but I can order the volume turned down or broadcasts stopped if necessary.

We will not start it again if it causes a nuisance to people.

The Gazette notes,

After K. Jatupon gave this replay, he called again to confirm that he has ordered the local "radio station" – run by the *gama-gan chumchon*, or village elders – to be shut down.

He invited anyone with similar complaints in the future to call him at the Engineering Department, at Tel: 076-311381 or 076-311952.

Issues & ANSWERS

Want to know how to get something done? Can't understand some of the dafter things that seem to go on in Phuket? Want to pitch an idea to Phuket's authorities or institutions? Then this is the forum for you.

Submit your queries or suggestions to us and we'll ask the appropriate people to respond to them.

Write to: The Phuket Gazette, 367/2 Yaowarat Rd, Muang, Phuket 83000. Fax 076-213971, or submit your issue at www.phuketgazette.net

My neighbor wants to suck all the water out of the ground

Our neighbor has dug five large (three-meter-diameter) wells on his property, apparently with the intention of selling the water pumped from them.

Are there no regulations limiting the number of wells allowed, and are permits not required before a well can be dug?

Lamsai
Rawai

The Chief Administrative office of Rawai Tambon Administration Organization (OrBorTor), Tewrat Tunpongcharoen replies,

"You do not need permission from the OrBorTor to dig a well for personal consumption of the water or for sale of the water as it is.

"There is also no limit to the number of wells you may dig on your land.

"However, if you build a bottling plant or something similarly ambitious then you do need permission, as this is big business."

Longtime exile seeks help finding her roots

I have been living outside Thailand for many years and want to come back again. Unfortunately, I have no relatives left in Thailand and I have no idea where my name was recorded on a house registration paper (*Tabien Baan*). How do I get a new house registration?

Ampa
Sweden

A Deputy District Officer at Phuket Muang District replies,

"The first thing we need to know is your age and where you were born.

"Also, do you plan to come back to Thailand permanently, or just temporarily? If I do not have enough information, I cannot give you an answer.

"If you are coming to Phuket, you can come and consult me at the Muang District Office, or call me at Tel: 076-212407. "Please note that under Thai law anyone over 20 years old may have only one nationality."

ON THE MOVE



Jan Stefan Kirstein, from Sweden, is the new General Manager of the 346-room luxury hotel the Sheraton Grande Laguna Phuket. Before his appointment, Mr Kirstein was based in Amman, Jordan, as GM of the Sheraton Amman Al Nabil Hotel & Towers. His career has also seen him holding positions in Egypt, Tunisia, Germany, Turkey, Portugal, Cyprus, Norway and in his home country.



The Briza Resort Group, managers and developers of The Briza Beach Resort & Spa and The Phulin Resort, has appointed **Krisda Chuenchitpisaikul**, from Bangkok, General Manager of The Phulin Resort (Phuket). Previously, he was F&B Catering Manager and F&B Manager at Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort, and has more than 15 years' experience in five-star hotels in Thailand.



Yotaka Chanroonglert, 27, a Phuket native, has been appointed Sales & Marketing Manager of Indochina Ceramics Co Ltd, in Thalang District. She has a degree from the Faculty of Communication Arts at Yonok College in Chiang Mai. Her work experience includes the post of Assistant Marketing Manager of Gems Gallery on the bypass road.

IT ISSUES

By John Seebach

Free wireless Internet access for everyone

Nowadays, the distinction between computing and communications has faded to a point where there really is none – and the laptop computer is the main reason for this. Whether it is serving as a digital mobile mailbox, a source for up-to-the-minute news, an entertainment center, a photo album or a telephone, your laptop can do it all and more.

And whether it is plugging into Skype for a quick chat with a friend, writing an email to the boss, or plugging into the guts of a manufacturing company's business systems, wireless Internet access has become as vital to computers as electricity is to the light bulb.

The result of all this will be a major shift in the way we think about telecommunications over the coming years.

The computer industry's commitment to "open standards" is gaining momentum, especially in the West. Open standards translates to common methods of computer and network designs, software authoring and web development.

This is combined with open and free access to the underlying software code and the hardware that runs it all. Because of this, new ideas in advertising must take on pricing models that reflect the all-you-can-eat trends in data access.

Wireless broadband is bringing Internet access to the far reaches of the globe – WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) and advertising are along for the ride...



This is especially true with free wireless service quickly becoming the standard. The winners from these trends will be the advertising companies and business models that make all this free access profitable.

Users around the globe already consider "free" to be the correct price for wireless Internet access. In the US and Europe, Wi-Fi technology is already considered a kind of public utility to which everyone has free access.

Hundreds of cities around the globe, including Munich, San Francisco and London, have launched citywide Wi-Fi networks that provide citizens in common areas, such as in parks, at bus stops and in public libraries, with free Wi-Fi access to the Internet.

This trend is the result of the fact that every laptop sold today has onboard Wi-Fi, which means it connects right out of the box. Rather than being driven by the telecommunications industry, which is controlled by a small group of players, this Wi-Fi trend is driven by the open standards and fierce competition of the computing industry.

The results of this are becoming more and more common even here in Phuket: Black Canyon, Andaman White Beach Hotel, the Watermark Bar & Restaurant and others now offer free wireless access to the Internet. Upscale hotels that still charge for Internet access are receiving more and more complaints from guests who find it outrageous that they are asked to pay up to 500 baht a day for Wi-Fi access.

Some of these guests probably run up hotel bills in the thousands of dollars, but when it comes to checkout time, they fiercely question this small charge for Internet access – because they expect Wi-Fi in public or semi-public places to be free.

Many hotels consider free Wi-Fi to be a competitive advantage. In fact, Google and other major players are already competing to offer free, ad-subsidized Wi-Fi-based services to entire cities.

The problem with this technology model is that, for now, only cellular wireless allows for true mobility, because the minute you step out of range of a wireless local access point in your hotel, home or coffee shop, you lose the signal. However, that all changes as another wireless technology with its roots in the computer industry gains widespread acceptance.

WiMAX promises to deliver to entire cities what Wi-Fi has done for coffee shops and hotel rooms. In the West, it uses the unlicensed spectrum of radio frequency, allowing for practically unlimited competition. However, here in Thailand, as you would guess, the government exercises tight controls over this frequency range; this cannot last for ever – I hope.

The introduction of WiMAX gear from Intel last year and the finalization of the standard itself will set the stage for WiMAX to take off in 2006.

The bad news is that out of all the wireless broadband technologies, WiMAX promises the most – and so far it has delivered the least. It is also facing some

very tough competition: fixed ADSL, dial-up and leased lines as just another broadband connection into the home or office, while mobile WiMAX competes with cellular broadband.

By the time WiMAX arrives, especially in Thailand, cellular wireless services such as GSM and Wi-Fi will already have had a good head start. So the real usefulness of WiMAX may simply be that of the backbone network delivering services to these other technologies. A backbone is like the cellular towers you see around the island, all connected to the telephone company's central nodes.

That being said, lady luck is on the side of WiMAX: with Intel's plans to push WiMAX into hundreds of millions of laptops, and the fact that there are potentially no limits on who can offer this service, I look to WiMAX technology as a clear winner in this new era of wireless Internet.

John Seebach has 25 years' consulting experience in information systems and business process re-engineering. His company, Island Technology, offers IT solutions and broadband services throughout Southeast Asia. For more information, send an email to john@islandtechnology.com

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Sasin Institute to launch a new campus in Phang Nga

PHANG NGA: The Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration, part of Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, has launched a joint-venture agreement with the USA's leading business school, the Kellogg School of Management, by announcing plans to set up a new campus for executive education in Phang Nga Province.

Prof Toemsakdi Krishnamra, Academic Director of Sasin, said the new campus will be built on about 50 rai of land at Baan Tah Nun in Kok Kloi, Tai Muang District.

It is due to be complete in 2008.

The campus will be able to accommodate 150 students living in, with more than 250 extra rooms to handle visitors during meetings and seminars.

The 20-year-old Sasin Institute is well-known for its MBA graduate management programs, and certificated courses for top-level executives.

The new campus will also offer special part-time courses for MBA programs and certificate programs for top-level executives from Europe, the US and Asia.

"Executives who take courses at Sasin can be confident that we will deliver the same high

standards of quality as are available at Kellogg or Wharton," Prof Toemsakdi said.

The Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration was set up 23 years ago under the aegis of Chulalongkorn University, when it was realized that Thailand needed world-class business education in order to compete globally. Sasin now ranks among the top 10 business schools in Asia.

During the past 23 years it has forged affiliations not only with the Kellogg School of Management, which is part of Northwestern University, but also with Wharton School, part of the University of Pennsylvania.

In last year's *Business Week* ranking of business schools, Kellogg and Wharton ranked 1st and 2nd in the world. Kellogg's MBA course was also ranked No 2 in the world by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The Dean of Kellogg, Dipak Jain, regularly visits Thailand to teach MBA, executive MBA and other executive courses at Sasin.

The college also has exchange programs with 16 institutions in the US, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Japan and Australia.

— Nattamon Ratcharak



Bangkok native Oranee 'Ann' Pienprasertkul (left) has been appointed General Manager of the *Phuket Gazette*. A graduate in business administration from Bangkok University, K. Ann joined the *Gazette* six years ago. She was assistant marketing manager before being promoted to Marketing Manager. Previously, she was Sales Department Co-ordinator at United Communication Industry Public Company Ltd (UCOM) in Bangkok.

Nattira 'Anna' Susangrat (right) has been promoted to Marketing Manager of the *Phuket Gazette*. The Phuket native has a degree from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus. K. Anna,

who joined the *Gazette* four years ago, was Web Services Manager before her promotion. She has also worked in PR for the Royal Phuket City Hotel and as a customer service representative for UCOM.

Londoner Mark Mulloy, 44, is Executive Producer of the newly launched PGTV. He moved to Hong Kong at the age of five, and after studying graphic design in the UK, returned to Hong Kong to work in advertising. During the 1980s he worked in local cinema, TV and radio as an actor, scriptwriter, newsreader and dubbing artist. After marrying a Thai in 1990, he moved to France and spent 14 years building up a printing business, which he sold last year.



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Often, when out and about, I meet people who tell me they enjoy my articles but wonder what my actual business is. The answer is: "Independent Financial Adviser" but, as this term still appears to confuse people, allow me to explain in greater detail.

I give people financial advice and assist them to plan their financial futures. Every situation is different and there is no magic formula that applies to everybody.

To do this it is first of all necessary to know to which major currency the client relates.

For example, an American will undoubtedly "think" in US Dollars, the British in Pounds Sterling and people from the Euro Zone area will relate to Euros, and so on.

This is not quite as simple as it may appear because, although an individual or family may live in Thailand, they may or may not find relating to foreign currencies an easy matter.

A good financial plan allows people to feel at ease with the situation, although these plans are continually under review – changing situations in financial markets, in economics and politics all play a part in overall asset allocation.

For example, a particular investment may rise 40% in a single year, but this does not necessarily mean that the investor should continue to hold this investment. It may well be time to take profits and seek alternatives.

MONEY TALKS



By Richard Watson

I deal exclusively with the resident expatriate community. There are a number of reasons for this. People who visit Phuket on vacation but actually live and are taxed in other countries are in an entirely different financial situation from genuine expatriates.

For example, a British resident faces a variety of taxes, including income tax, capital gains and, on death, inheritance tax. An Australian visitor also faces a similar situation, as do the majority of residents of most other countries in the world.

A long-term expatriate is usually in a different situation; one that can be used in most cases to great advantage. This is when people will probably first come across the terms "onshore" and "offshore". In the most basic of explanations, "offshore" relates to the use of "tax havens" or low-tax jurisdictions to base individual financial planning.

What does an independent financial adviser do, exactly?

The investment world is also very aware of the expatriate market. It is no coincidence that not only have many banks established branches outside of their home countries, but also huge numbers of other financial institutions.

In the mutual fund/unit trust industry it is not a lack of choices that faces the individual, it is a surfeit of them.

In fact, well over 10,000 unit trusts/mutual funds are now targeted directly at expatriates. These investment vehicles cover every asset class, and invest capital all over the world.

One of the functions of a financial planner is to assist in the planning of an individual or family's financial situation and to take cognizance of personal requirements in this area.

It increasingly requires dealing with all the anti-money-laundering requirements as well. The good news is that, in reality, if people keep records of how they acquired wealth, i.e. sale of property, investment, bank statements, etc. they will, generally, find the process simple.

To most expats, the question would immediately arise, why would I need to satisfy anti-money-laundering requirements?

It is a good question and the answer is not simple.

A decade ago, financial institutions required only the completion of an application form and a signed copy of a passport before accepting the investor's money. Today, the situation is entirely different.

Governments have combined to force the rest of the world to comply with their anti-money-laundering requirements. Excuses for this interference include terrorism, drug smuggling and organized crime.

In reality, they are far more interested in finding out which of their own citizens normally resident in their original countries are evading tax.

In the course of financial planning, the adviser, naturally, has to assist clients with their own personal requirements. Some people need an income immediately, other will require it in the future, while others are simply seeking capital growth.

To simplify the management of client portfolios, use is made of offshore "platforms". These platforms are offered by a number of well-known financial institutions and are, in addition, covered by government guarantees. They allow access to

global money markets, capital markets and the total variety of asset classes.

There is no restriction forcing one to deal with only one institution. They allow access to virtually every financial institution in the world and can access "onshore" and "offshore" investments with equal ease. This also allows individuals to deal with anti-money-laundering requirements in one go.

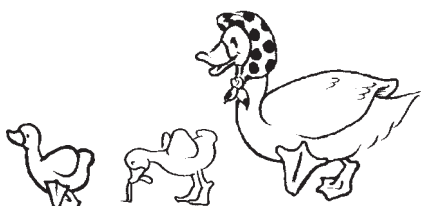
I do not have ties to any one financial institution – as an independent financial adviser, I would not have it any other way. I am also my clients' personal trade union; often I end up correcting oversights in documentation to speed up processes.

An advantage I have over the general public is that I know the staff of financial institutions, often up to director or CEO level, and my case will receive a direct hearing. After all, I have been in the same business for over 20 years.

Richard Watson runs Global Portfolios Co Ltd, a Phuket-based personal financial planning service. He can be reached at Tel and Fax: 076-381997, Mobile: 01-081-4611. Email: imm@loxinfo.co.th

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By Mike Glass

Much has been written in these pages about the design of Phuket golf courses, with mention made of holes both Heroic and Strategic. Little, however, has been written about how technology has changed the game we love.

In the picture, you can see a Persimmon wood driver, an original TaylorMade steel wood – not an oxymoron – and the SasQuatch 460, a hi-tech driver from Nike, which is made from exotic metals, including titanium, and is advertised as the club with the largest “footprint” in golf.

The volume of the club head is a formidable 460 cubic centimeters, but it isn't just the size of the club head and the materials used in its construction that make it so revolutionary.

The materials used in the design of the club shaft have changed – evolved, really – from bamboo to steel, and in the case of the massive Nike club and others, graphite.

DISTANCE

One of the net results of the advances in technology, including size and materials, is that the distance a golfer can propel a ball has increased.

And, in turn, one of the consequences of being able to hit a ball farther is that some holes are now obsolete.

The received wisdom as to how to play a Heroic hole has become “slam and go for it”, although strategic holes have become overpowered.

The PGA acknowledges this to be the case, because actually hitting the fairway is no longer considered that important. When a player gets within 130 yards of the pin, the rough ceases to be a problem, and most of the designed trouble is behind you.

How technology is changing golf



The SasQuatch 460 hi-tech driver (left) is advertised as the club with the largest ‘footprint’ in golf at 460 square centimeters.

Larger club-faces permit players to swing at the ball as hard as they want, because fears of missing the ball have been reduced.

The materials used in the construction of the club face allow the ball to leave the tee with less spin and with greater velocity. The exotic metals employed allow for better positioning of the weight to give the player – and the ball – the desired flight. High-low draw fade is built into the club. The shaft material now allows for lighter clubs and kick points high, low or anywhere manufacturers feel will help the club they have designed.

Put simply, find the club that suits your game and rip it.

The rules of golf have now stipulated the maximum dimensions of club size and length. The max size is 460cc and length is

47 inches measured from the top of the shaft to the bottom of the club (not the shaft).

The PGA Golf Show in Orlando, Florida, taking place as this edition of the *Gazette* goes to

print, will no doubt see many new and exciting innovations. Watch this space for updates.

I began by discussing drivers, and will round off by making some observations about how we use them.

When next you go to the driving range, take a few moments to check how much time people put into hitting with the driver. You will probably notice that most of the golfers at the range are putting in a disproportionate amount of practice with a club they will use just 14 – or less – times per round of golf.

PUTTING

For comparison, check the practice putting green and see how little time is spent in this area. A putter will, on average, hit the ball 30 times per round.

The last time I checked the rules of golf, I found that a stroke with a driver counted the same as the stroke with the putter. Go figure: spend all day practicing to hit an area 40 yards wide and spend no time when trying to hit an area less than four inches wide.

Finally, here is a golfer's tip to help you see if you have your hands at the proper height. If your hands are holding the club too low, you will see wrinkles around your wrist because your wrists will be slightly cocked. If the hands are too high you will see wrinkles by the left palm where the hand joins the wrist.

50 yachts expected to join Langkawi Regatta

By Chris Husted

LANGKAWI: Organizers of the Royal Langkawi International Regatta (RLIR) 2006, to be held from February 11 to 17, expect some 50 yachts to take part.

This year, the winner of the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy – the top prize in the regatta – will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Valencia, Spain, where the 32nd America's Cup will be contested in 2007, to meet America's Cup contenders BMW Oracle Racing and to visit the

team's base camp.

The RLIR official website, at the time of going to press, lists 37 yachts as registered, including 2005 class winners *La Samudra*, *Minx*, *Chameleon* and *Lady M* – all of which are Phuket-based yachts. However, Peter Ahern, who last year skippered *Yo!* to his third consecutive Racing class victory, and the yacht *Sonnen Koenig*, which came second in the Racing class last year, have yet to enter.

Chris Sieber's *Kilo*, which won the Multihull Cruising class

last year, may still take part, despite going missing off Kata Beach on December 18. The boat was later found in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, some 725 kilometers from home.

Mr Sieber told the *Gazette* that, depending on the boat's condition, he was looking forward to defending his title.

In addition, Jim Ellis has yet to enter *Remington* to defend his Club class title.

The regatta organizers, the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club, have announced an extra day of registration on February 11 for latecomers to have their sails measured, as required by the regatta rules, though the four days of racing will still be held from February 12-16.

Despite the extra registration day, the Rebak Champagne Run, the traditional pre-RLIR overnight race from Ao Chalong to the Rebak Marina at Langkawi, will start on Chalong Bay at midday on February 11.

A skippers' briefing for the Run will be held at the Ao Chalong Yacht Club (ACYC), on the evening of February 10.

For more information or to enter the RLIR, visit the website www.langkawiregatta.com

For more information or to enter the Rebak Champagne Run, call Tony Knight of the ACYC at Tel: 01-7470074.

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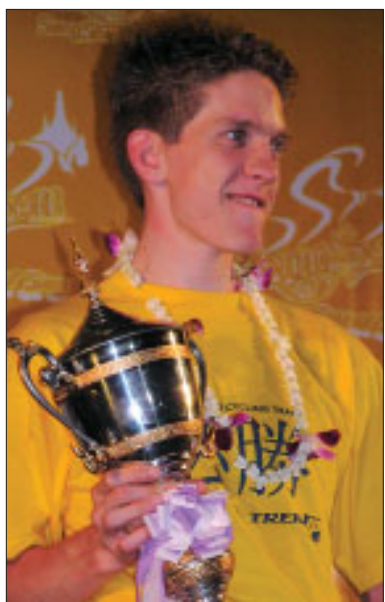
Flying Dutchman Rabou wins the Tour of Siam

By Anongnat Sartpisut

PHUKET: In his first professional race, Dutchman Thomas Rabou of the Marco Polo Cycling Club beat a field of 142 cyclists to capture the overall title in the seven-stage Sangsom Tour of Siam 2006.

Rabou, 22, finished the grueling 1,017-kilometer tour in a winning time of 23:40:49 – 1:41 ahead of second placed finisher Shinichi Fukushima of Japan and 1:53 ahead of Dane Michael Berling, who came in third.

Rabou took home the HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn trophy and 120,000 baht in cash.



Winner Rabou with his trophy.

Rabou, who started cycling just six years ago, also took fourth place in the seventh and final stage, a 120-km circuit around Phuket starting at Saphan Hin, going north to Tah Chat Chai and then back south along a hilly west coast segment to the finish at Laem Phromthep.

Rabou turned pro last January and now competes for Marco Polo Cycling Team, which won the overall team competition on strong performances by all of its riders – including New Zealander Robin Reid (6th), Fuyu Li of China (8th) and Australian Rhys Pollock (38th).

The young Dutchman took over the yellow jersey when a number of Marco Polo riders surged ahead of the main pack as part of a breakaway during the critical stage six.

Rabou told the *Gazette* he was surprised yet delighted with his win.

"I did it as a preparation for the European season, so I just expected to only finish this race...so I am really happy about it," he said.

He said he enjoyed the scenery on the course, which started in Bangkok and went south along the Gulf coast through Hua Hin and Prachuap Khiri Khan before heading west and continuing south along the Andaman Coast through Ranong,



UPHILL ALL THE WAY: heading for the finish at Laem Phromthep.

Phang Nga and on to Saphan Hin in Phuket City.

He said the biggest challenge was enduring the 35°C-40°C heat, though riding with the lead pack allowed him to remain focused.

After receiving the winner's trophy from Vice-Governor Niran Kanlayanamit during a post-race awards ceremony and farewell party, Rabou told the *Gazette* that he expects to return to defend his championship during the Tour of Siam 2007.

The top Thai rider was Jatupoom Lekawat of the Siam

Bara Team, who is also a member of Thailand's national team. K. Jatupoom came tenth overall and was also second in the "Best Asean Rider" category, finishing 45 seconds behind Indonesian Robert Wijaya.

Wijaya also won the white jersey for the best time set by a rider under 21 years of age.

The winner of the 120.4-km Phuket Circuit was Daniel Lloyd of Britain, riding for the Taiwan-based Giant Asia Team.

He finished in 2:49:03, beating Kuan-hua Lai of Taiwan by 38 seconds.

Pairroj wins President's Cup at PCC

PHUKET: Tanongphol Pairroj scored a gross 68 to beat 188 other golfers and win the Phuket Golf Association's 2006 President's Cup at the Phuket Country Club on January 21.

Results were as follows:

"Professional" Championship: 1. Tanongphol Pairroj (68); 2. Payom Khanthakul (75); 3. Kijja Pongprapas (75); 4. Gerhard Wagner (76); 5. Craig Jeffery (80); 6. Karun Panichpichertwong (80).

Overall: Low Gross: Nobuyuki Baba 73; Low Net: Chanont Sparre Khudsen 88 (handicap 28) for a net of 60.

Flight A (handicap of 0-9): 1. Charnchai Chimkerd 73 (2) 71; 2. Sati Hongyok 74 (3) 71; 3. Surin Bumrunghol 74 (2) 72.

Flight B (10-18): Low net: 1. Wanchai Nontanum 86 (18) 68; 1. Pongsak Kongkaew 87 (18) 69; 3. Samarn Chainarong 82 (12) 70.

Flight C (19-24): 1. Damrong Hungthanaphan 91 (24) 67; 2. Vorapoj Wongmuneeworn 97 (24) 73.

Seniors: 1. Charly Bertoud 98 (36) 62; 2. Wittaya Tantipriyakij 75 (5) 70; 3. Dannis McDonald 89 (18) 71.

Ladies: Low Gross, Araya Sanprapa 87; Low Net, Rattana Petheid 94 (22) 72.

Youth: Low Gross, Tanat Phungdej 81; Low Net, Pariwat Pinsawas 85 (23) 62.

– Sangkhae Leelanapaporn

Patong Darts League: how the mighty are fallen

By Stephen Fein

PATONG: Showing just how topsy-turvy the darts league is, after four weeks defending champs Winchester are mired in dead last, having earned just one point out of a possible 12.

Word has it that many of the team's top players have left town, and that they are now finding it hard to field a full side.

Anyone capable of hurling sharp objects accurately while under the influence of alcohol is encouraged to apply.

Meanwhile, Amigos – the only team still undefeated in beer legs as this goes to press – has taken over the top spot from Queen Mary, which suffered a shock defeat at resurgent Didi's side.

January 17 results: Winchester 3 Dog's Bollocks* 6; Two Black Sheep 3 Amigos* 6; Shakers* 3 Valhalla 6; The Boss Bar 1 Offshore* 8; Didi's* 6 Queen Mary 3; Coyote Bar 4 Piccadilly* 6. (* = Winner of beer leg)

Standings: 1. Amigos (10pts); 2. Didi's 9; 3. Queen Mary, Valhalla (8); 5. Dog's Bollocks, Shakers, Offshore (7); 8. Piccadilly (6); 9. Coyote Bar (4); 10.

Two Black Sheep (3); 11. The Boss bar (2); 12. Winchester (1). **January 31 matchups:** Winchester v Piccadilly; Two Black

Sheep v Offshore; Shakers v Queen Mary; Boss Bar v Amigos; Didi's vs Dog's Bollocks; Coyote Bar v Valhalla.

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The present owner, a master at lighting, has already set the

stage for outstanding evening entertaining.

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There are more than 700 square meters of living area in this traditional Thai teak home, which also has three salas, a swimming pool, fish ponds, an elegant waterfall, a children's pool, large outside decking, maid's quarters, an office area, storage space and a car port.

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Decor

by Ananya Hongsa-ngiam



These Chinese silk jacket-style tissue roll holders from Iyara Oriental cost 285 baht each.

GOING UNDER COVER



195 baht for a cylindrical woven bamboo cover from Torfan, and 390 baht for a rectangular one.

One ever-present handy household item is a box of tissues, and yet, no matter how well the box is decorated by the manufacturer, it may simply not suit the look of your home.

That's a good reason to consider disguising it beneath a specially-made cover. Tissue-box covers come in a wide variety of interesting designs and materials.

Iyara Oriental offers different tissue-box cover designs for rectangular tissue boxes and for the roll-type tissue dispenser.

For the rectangular tissue-box, a sarong silk cover costs 175 baht, while one made from cotton costs 195 baht.

For tissue rolls, you can buy a cover shaped like a Chinese shirt for 295 baht or like a jacket for 285 baht. Both styles of cover are made from silk.

Iyara Oriental is on the first floor of Ocean Shopping Mall, located on Tilok-Uthit Rd in Phuket City.

For more information, Tel: 076-354599.

Torfan, on the second floor

of Ocean Shopping Mall, offers rectangular and cylindrical, brightly colored woven bamboo tissue box covers from Pathum Thani Province, north of Bangkok – an area, incidentally, that is celebrated for its tangerines.

Cylindrical covers cost 195 baht and rectangular ones are priced at 390 baht each.

They come in five colors: red, brown, orange, purple and "natural".

For more information contact Sasikarn "Tom" Siripaisarnkul at Tel: 01-5358388.

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Gardening

with Bloomin' Bert

Phuket has more than its fair share of watering holes. Some are known for their live music or spectacular views; some are frequented for the lovely ladies in sequins and long boots performing their version of the latest hits on the Thai pop charts. And there are a number of bars offer "additional services" of various kinds, or so I'm told...

I'm more of a fan of the smaller places away from the tourist areas, but that's just me.

As regular readers may have realized by now, I have been known to enjoy the occasional tippie. Rather than sit quietly at home like the sad old man I'm fast becoming, I do, on occasion, frequent the odd local tavern.

Part of me would argue that I'm doing a public service by supporting local businesses, but I wish I could do that supporting by having only one or two beers per night. Alas, it never seems to work out that way. When it comes down to it I probably "support" them a little too much.

Anyway, one of my preferred haunts has got to be Nikita's, on Rawai Beach. I'm not sure if it's the stunning views out to the islands off to the south of Phuket, or the copious amounts of greenery that abound in and around the bar. The

What's the link between dangly bits and beer?

proprietor, Niki, is a bit of a fan of potted plants. They're everywhere. She obviously looks after them carefully, as all in her care look incredible.

She's got mother-in-law's tongues by the bucketload, and those small, green- and yellow-striped dracaena that snake their way skyward. There are some plants with stunning little orange flowers out the front that I can't even identify, but whatever they are, I want some.

Anyway, pride of place at Nikita's is probably one of the more common plants in Phuket. This is one that anybody would look at, and say that the bits dangling down look a lot like cats' tails. It doesn't take a genius to work out where I'm going with this – the cat's tail, or chenille

plant, is exactly that – a shrubby plant with hundreds of small "cats' tails". It is known as *hang ka-rok* in Thai.

The bright red "tails", or inflorescences, to use the official gardening term, are actually made up of numerous tiny flowers, and can grow as long as 50 centimeters. These flowers appear continually, making this an ideal plant to use as a border or hedge, as it grows very quickly and with very little effort.

The chenille plant is a member of a family that visually has very little in common with it – the copper leaf, or beefsteak plant. These cultivars have an amazing array of unlikely colors, from copper (not surprisingly) to brown, white and bronze. The shape of the leaves is also unpredictable. Some are flat, some wavy, and some look as if they've been



Cats' tails at Nikita's.

scrunched up by a bored origamist.

It's difficult to imagine the chenille plant being part of this same family (*acalypha*), as it looks so different to its relatives. The lack of imagination in its leaves is more than made up for by the red dangly cats' tails, though. This plant is a bit like the punk-rocker teenage son of a straight-laced bank manager. The genes are there, but very little else.

The only work required on the gardener's part for the chenille and all members of the *acalypha* group is frequent pruning. They will soon start to look a bit straggly before they reach their full height of around a couple of meters, but attack them with the pruning shears and they'll surely thank you in the long run. Older plants can grow even taller than that, but in common with their human counterparts, they need something to support them.

The chenille plant is quite content in most types of well-drained landscape soils. It grows and flowers best in full sun, with little care other than water

needed to maintain the plant once it's established, and only when the soil begins to dry. The only potential problem is where you put the water. Try to keep the water off the flower spikes if possible, as this helps to prevent disease problems.

Attractive as the cats' tails might be, this probably isn't the ideal plant for a children's play area, as all parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested. It's interesting that the best-looking plants are often the ones that will do you the most harm if you're daft enough to eat them.

The chenille is easy to propagate. A healthy cutting in compost will quickly turn into a clone of its parent. I wouldn't advise a sly cutting from one of Nikita's plants, though – Niki sees all.

The time of day has arrived when I need to pop out and do a little further plant investigation in this particular hostelry. It's important that I conduct such studies on a full stomach, so I may as well order a beer on arrival. Purely in the interest of scientific research, you understand.

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The Palm Beach Club

LAGUNA: The Palm Beach Club – a Thai contemporary design property development – will be located on a 10-rai plot of land at Bang Tao Beach in the Laguna area.

The Palm Beach Club Sales & Marketing Director Wanwisa Thinsaku explained, “This location is attractive for investors in the upper-class market. It has easy access to local five-star facilities and services, and is on the beach front.”

She added, “Customers can rest assured that the beach is clean and beautiful, and that these villas [will] enjoy full privacy with maximum facilities made available for them.”

Construction will start in April and all units are expected to be complete by April 2008.

The Palm Beach Club offers 31 units in total.

BEACHFRONT

There will be seven three-story villas ranging each with floor space of 748.6 square meters, ranging in price from 76 million to 82 million baht. All units will have beach-front access and will feature four bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, living and dining rooms, a Western-style kitchen, a private pool, a whirlpool bath, a sala, a pond and parking space.

The project's condominiums will be split into two- and three-bedroom designs, with standard fittings and en-suite bathrooms, a living and dining room and a kitchen area. The ground floor will feature a garden, a lagoon and pool view, and the first floor will have a sea view.

There will be six 169sqm two-bedroom units priced between 14.5 and 16.9 million baht, and 12 239sqm three-bedroom

units in a price range of 20.5 to 24 million baht.

The Palm Beach Club will also feature six 320sqm, 39.9-million-baht penthouses. These will have three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a whirlpool bath, living and dining room, a kitchen and car-parking space.

K. Wanwisa explained that the penthouses will be split into two sections.

“If the children need to play games, they can enjoy themselves while the rest of the family can watch TV in peace,” she said.

Facilities and services will include a shared pool, clubhouse, gymnasium and spa facilities, a small library, a bar and restaurant and with 24-hour security service.

All units will have air conditioning as standard, and all bedrooms will have large closets. Kitchens will be fitted with black African granite worktops.

Each unit will also have an electricity control panel, a hot water system, ceiling fans, a CAT communications system and five Internet and telephone lines.

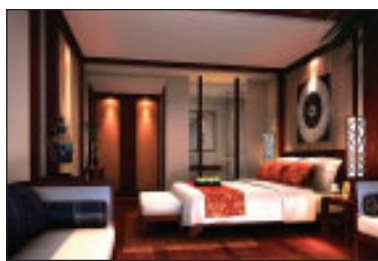
The properties will be built using a selection of high-quality materials featuring marble and granite with solid wood doors and windows, and a white powder-coat aluminum exterior.

The management company will look after the needs of common areas, such as garbage collection and ground maintenance.

The infrastructure boasts an underground water and electricity supply. Water will be supplied from project's own well.

The Palm Beach Club is being developed by GST International.

“We are aiming for a high-end European, Russian, and Hong Kong clientele who are looking



Artist's computer impressions of various options in the Palm Beach development.

to buy a second home or a holiday home or even to invest in property,” K. Wanwisa said.

“Feedback is good and potential customers are [already] approaching us to look at the site,” she added.

For more information contact GST International at Tel: 01-9681601, 076-290156-9 or Fax: 076-290155 or email: info@thepalmbeachclub.com, or visit the website at www.thepalmbeachclub.com

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Patong Harbor

The Beach Boulevard. A smart move in Paradise

These luxury boutique hotel-style guesthouses are designed specifically for sale to discerning investors looking for a property with potential in the Kata Beach area. The project is being developed and managed by a professional team with more than 10 years' experience.

The Beach Boulevard is located just 300 meters from the Club Med, a few minutes away from the popular Kata Beach, and is a short drive from Phuket City (30 minutes) and Phuket International Airport (50 minutes).

Each three-story hotel compound has 12 bedrooms and 13 bathrooms. Facilities include air conditioning and water heaters.

The suites in each boutique hotel all come fully equipped with a kitchen, dining room, living room and luxurious office area. High-quality materials have been used throughout.

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Every day is a holiday at The Beach Pool Villa.

3 units of detached two-story homes on 1.1 rai of land. Only 400m from Kata Beach. Feel the warm ocean breeze and enjoy the uniqueness of living in a tropical paradise.

A tropical modern-style home with local touches. The overall design emphasizes simplicity. An L-shaped wall allows more space for family activities and a party. Glass walls make it possible to view all areas of the house. A private swimming pool with salt water has therapeutic benefits. It is located in an enclosed area adjoining the unit and can be viewed from two master bedrooms on the second floor. To increase privacy, the garage is specially designed to stand in a spot that partly covers the pool.

All this combines to make The Beach Pool Villa one of the best-designed two-story homes with a pool in the Kata area.

The unit is 13.25 x 23.50m on an area of 34 x 23m. Usage area is 415sqm with swimming pool included.

Financed by Siam Commercial Bank (PCL) Co., Ltd.

Property Gazette

Properties For Sale

NICE POOL VILLAS FOR SALE



In Kata, Nai Harn. Prices start from 7 million baht. Please contact. Tel: 04-8374429. Email: sale@chokeproperty.com More pictures of nice villas at: www.chokechaiproperty.com

LAND FOR SALE

A good price for 6.5 rai of land with title, next to Laguna and with public road access, water and electricity supply. Please call for details. Tel: 01-8062166.

HOUSE IN KAMALA

2-story house with 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms, air conditioning, a pool, walled-in garage, and a garden. Asking 35,000 baht per month or will sell for 6.2 million baht. Call after 5 pm. Tel: 076-385940.

KATA SEAVIEW HOUSE



A large, 250sqm house with a pool, 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, a Western-style teak kitchen, teak doors and ceilings, on a quiet hillside. Asking 10 million baht or offers. Contact for details. Tel: 09-5926890. Email: north8west98@yahoo.com

BEACH APARTMENTS

Spacious, modern, 2-bedroom apartments, some with a sea view, gardens, pools, clubhouse, gym, sauna; a 2-minute walk to the beach. Priced from 8.5 million baht. On-site sales office. Tel: 06-2806624. See our website: www.bangtaobeachgardens.com

RAWAI LUXURY VILLA

144sqm house with 400sqm or 600sqm of land, 350m from the beach. Asking 2.4 million baht. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

6-BEDROOM HOUSE IN KAMALA



Owner is selling an exclusive, top-quality 6-bedroom house in Kamala, near Phuket Fantasea, 1.5km from the beach and next to a beautiful natural lake. The house has all the facilities you need – a European-Thai kitchen, large living-dining room with pantry-bar; 2 smaller bedrooms on the ground floor and 4 large bedrooms with en-suite bathroom on the 1st floor; a large attic. Solar-heated hot-water system, own well and drinking water, etc. Large, mature garden with outdoor Jacuzzi. Chanote title, total land area: 1,180sqm. Special price offer for January/February. Asking price is now only 15 million baht for quick decision-makers. For more details, please contact Franz Brun in Chalong. Tel: 076-282737 or 01-4761415. Email: fbrun@loxinfo.co.th

BOAT LAGOON

Marina Residence. 2-story townhouse, carport, 2 bedrooms, fully and tastefully furnished with quality teak furniture. Excellent view facing waterway, ready to move in, freehold investment. Tel: 076-273332 (Phuket), 65-96162862 (Singapore). Email: gc.fricke@pacific.net.sg

HOUSE IN PATONG

Private, with a distinct view and nice garden in a good area. Chanote title. Asking 3 million baht. Tel: 07-0444387.

BOAT LAGOON

Marina. A very nice 1-bedroom townhouse condominium, end-unit, 2 floors, 200sqm, with extras and a large mooring. Freehold, Chanote title. Asking 9.5 million baht. Tel: 01-273-4000.

www.knightfrankphuket.com

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Beachside Retreat

"sea view villa, walk to the beach"

- absolute sea views
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2-STORY, RAWAI

house. 130 & 200 sqm house with Chanote title, 400m from the beach. Asking 900,000 baht. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

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Condos with nice sea views, 28sqm and 56sqm, for sale. Priced from 750,000 baht. Near bank and post office. Please contact for further information. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

RAWAI CONDOS

with sea views. Area: 27, 54 and 81sqm. Prices start from 350,000 baht. Financing for 3 years available. Foreign freehold. Please contact for further information. Tel: 09-4740227. Email: chotip_5@hotmail.com

BEACH LAND PLOTS



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Rare larger corner block toward rear of estate. Price: 22,000 baht/wah. Fantastic location, close to town, Chalong, Big C, Lotus etc. For details, please Email: john867332@yahoo.com

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NEW HOUSE IN PATONG

Brand-new, deluxe house with a swimming pool on a Patong hillside, Soi Maneesi. 2 floors, modern Thai-style architecture, completely furnished, ready to live in. Ground floor: big living room, Western-style kitchen and dining room; guest toilet. 2nd floor: big master bedroom and bath with Jacuzzi, 2 bedrooms and a separate bathroom. Each room has an air conditioner and a balcony. Living area: 200sqm; freehold land 150sqm. Price: 8.5 million baht. (US\$210,000). Please contact K. Peter for more info at Tel: 01-8928526 or visit: www.phuket-besthomes.com

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Baan Benjamas on Soi San Sabai in Patong Beach area. Has a living room, Western kitchen, dining room, a storage room, 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom, cable TV, 3 air conditioners, a telephone and 24-hour security. Located 50m from a pool. Please call for more information. Tel: 04-8450541, 01-8914561.

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Located in a luxury development with underground electricity, 10 minutes from the airport and 20 minutes to Central Festival. For quick sale at only 1.3 million baht. Tel: 01-2712825.

NEW HOUSES IN PATONG

3 new, connected, deluxe houses on Patong hillside, Soi Thamdee, for sale. Ground floor: garage and separate 1-room apartment with toilet. 2nd floor: 2 bedrooms and bathrooms, balcony. 3rd floor: living room with balcony, built-in kitchen and dining room, toilet. 4th floor: big roof garden with a Jacuzzi. Usable area: 200sqm; freehold land: 100sqm. Price: 6.2 million baht (US\$155,000). Please contact K. Peter for more information at Tel: 01-8928526 or visit our website at: www.phuket-besthomes.com

RAWAI SHOPHOUSES

2 new, connected shophouses on Wiset Rd, in Rawai. Ground floor: sales office, staff room, kitchen, dining room and toilet. 2nd floor: master bedroom with separate bath and 2 separate bedrooms with connecting bathroom. 3rd floor: living room and en-suite bedroom. Living area of 200sqm; freehold land: 100sqm. Price: 4.5 million baht. (US\$113,000). Please contact K. Peter. Tel: 01-892-8526. For more information, please see our website: www.phuket-besthomes.com

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Property Gazette

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HOUSE FOR SALE IN VILLA 5



Phuket Villa 5, 90sqm., 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a large living area and kitchen, 3 air conditioners and a telephone line. Only 5 minutes to Central Festival Phuket and only 15 minutes to Rawai. For sale by owner. Asking 4.5 million baht. No Agents! Tel: 04-1868531, 01-5988725. Email: s_oranut@hotmail.com

KATA SEAVIEW

Price: 6.5 million baht per rai. Full sea view, near main road, electricity available. Tel: 01-5376866.

1 TO 100 RAI

of beach front. The last beach in paradise is for sale, starting at 1 million baht per rai. Tel: 07-8938747.

BEACHFRONT LAND

Starting at 1 million baht per rai. Good water for swimming, Chanote title, fully exclusive. Tel: 09-6525664.

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Has water, access road, electricity, perfect for house. Asking 3.7 million baht. Tel: 09-6525664.

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Almost 500 square meters in Nai Harn. Asking 1.2 million baht. Has access road, electricity. Tel: 01-5376866.

NAI HARN SEA VIEW

Asking 3.7 million baht per rai for beautiful plot with three-phase electricity and access road. Tel: 07-8938747.

FULL SEAVIEW

45 rai in Patong. Perfect for hotel, resort or project. Open to offers. Please call for more information. Tel: 01-5376866.

LAND WITH SEA VIEW

For sale on a hill in Rawai. 794sqm for 11 million baht. Tel: 04-8374429. Email: sales@chokechaiproperty.com

ABSOLUTE BEACHFRONT



for sale. 2.2 rai of absolute beachfront land with Chanote title at Khok Kloy. Please call for details. No agents please. Tel: 07-889-1717. Email: wayne_phuket@yahoo.com

FREEHOLD FLAT



Phuket Palace Condominium, fully furnished, 1- or 2-bedroom, 1- or 2-bathroom, with kitchen, living room. 120sqm. Asking 5.9 million baht. Please call for info. Tel: 09-8719739.

RESTAURANT IN PATONG

Just 300 meters from the beach, and 150 meters from the new Jungceylon shopping center and Tiger Disco. A three-story building located on Soi San Sabai. On the top floor, there are two 45sqm apartments. The restaurant includes all fixtures and fittings, such as a 42" TV, UBC, kitchen, 40 seats and 6 staff. This business is ready to start. Three-year lease contract which owner can renew for 3 more years. Rent: 20,000 baht per month. Asking 2.75 million baht + 2 months' rent as deposit. A good opportunity to get started in business in Patong. Tel: 04-6906904. Email: momo_f@hotmail.com

NEW TWO-STORY

house. Meets European building standards, with pool in Chalong area, two minutes from Chalong Pier. price: 9.9 million baht. Please call for full details. Tel: 07-8896074.

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The old song goes: "they paved paradise and put up a parking lot..." (Sound familiar? This is what Phuket is becoming.) We refuse to do this; our land is right beside a National Park with the best sea view of Phang Nga Bay I have ever seen (considered by many to be one of the 7 wonders of the world). We are going to keep the park-like atmosphere, so no street lights and minimal paved roads. If you like giant original-growth trees behind you and Phang Nga Bay in all its wonder in front of you, call me. Chanote title, sea views. Starting at 3.8 million baht per rai. Also, flat land with some sea views available for 2.4 million baht per rai. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

2 RAI IN PALAI AREA,

near sea; with Chanote title, electricity, water, and road access. Asking 3.2 million baht per rai. Please contact for info. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

1 + RAI NEAR RAWAI

beach. 1 + 1/4 rai with water, electricity and road access, near Rawai Beach. Asking 4 million baht per rai. Please contact for more details. Tel: 07-2747470. Email: nsupin@yahoo.com

FOR SALE/RENT

4 bungalows and 1 restaurant at Bang Tao Beach. Tel: 01-8946686. Please see our website for more info at: www.phuketnatureplace.com

LAND IN RAWAI

3 rai in a good location. Selling for 3.3 million baht per rai. Tel: 04-8374429. Email: sales@chokechaiproperty.com

COMPLETE PROJECT

Ready-to-launch showhouse plus office, ready to make 200 million baht profit. No brokers. Price: 90 million baht for 12 rai. Email: karton20@hotmail.com

32 RAI, WITH CHANOTE TITLE



Layan Soi 1. A premium residential zone, 5 minutes from Layan Beach. Garden view, public road access (40m). Price: 3 million baht per rai. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-0503007, 06-5658421.

NICE NEW HOUSE

Plot of 111 square wah in Land & Houses park, a nice, private estate for building a new house. 5 minutes to Phuket City, Tesco-Lotus and Central Festival. Price: 2.1 million baht. Please contact for info. Tel: 01-6911986. Email: budspk@hotmail.com

NEW VILLA, KATA

Luxurious villa, on 600sqm. Ready to move into; with pool and sea view. Special price; 16 million baht. Tel: 04-0639223. Email: info@msa-phukt.com

16 RAI ON ISLAND

A perfect spot for a resort or hotel, with a white-sand beach for swimming and a pier for boating. Asking 3.9 million baht a rai. Call the owner. Tel: 09-6575664.

Properties For Rent

PATONG APARTMENT

Clean and comfortable, with air conditioner, a TV, a big fridge, double bed, pool and parking. Please contact. Tel: 01-0825707. Email: ask@phuket-accommodation.info

RAWAI, 2-STORY

Brand-new house for long-term rent. 2 bedrooms, fully furnished, 400m from beach. Asking 12,000 baht a month. Please call for more details. Tel: 01-4763623.

HOME OFFICE/SHOP

3 stories, with new glass, new air conditioner, 2 phone lines. In a prime location on Chaofa East Rd. Rent: 22,000 baht/month and 2 months' deposit. Tel: 01-0808557. Email: info@no1visa.com



NEW 2-STORY HOME

for rent. Very convenient location in Phuket City. Just 5 mins to Tesco-Lotus, Central, Bangkok Hospital Phuket. Unfurnished, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, front and back yards. 18,000 baht per month. Please contact Ann-Gazette at **01 868 7676**

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NEW 2-BEDROOM HOUSE

Unfurnished house with a garage, located in a quiet area 3km from Phuket City, 2km to the beach. Asking 5,000 baht per month. Tel: 05-8855415.

NEW HOME OFFICE

For rent/sale. Modern home office in beautiful project, with 3 stories and carpark 1km from Central Festival, on Chaofa Nok Rd. Asking 35,000 baht per month. Please call for more info. Tel: 076-224620, 01-5360536.

FLATS FOR RENT

Available now! Self-contained, modern designed flats in the Kathu area. Near Baan Wad Dam, close to golf courses and international schools. Best suited for young couples or a single person wanting long-stay accommodation. Can be used for business and housing combined. Please contact for info. Tel: 01-6916096. Email: myers_ps@yahoo.co.uk

BEST SEAVIEW HOME RENTAL



4-bedroom home with private bungalow. Located in Baan Suan Kamnan, atop Amari Hotel. Has a 3-meter deep pool. Teak roof and furnishings. Very quiet and safe. Available February 20. Also for sale for 32 million baht. Email: pococonnor@hotmail.com

PATONG PENTHOUSE

A lovely 80sqm fully furnished unit with a sea view plus a 20sqm pool. Includes 1 bedroom, a lounge and kitchen. Asking 25,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

DETACHED BUNGALOW

in Rawai. A beautifully furnished, brand-new home with 3 bedrooms, a full kitchen and lovely gardens with a swimming pool. Long-term rental for only 50,000 baht per month. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

OCEAN VIEW APT

Located in Patong. Fully furnished and fitted out; has 1 bedroom. For long-term rental only. 29,000 baht per month. Please call for information. Tel: 076-345081, 01-9241447.

FOR RENT, BANGLA

Commercial property for rent. Please call for more info. Tel: 09-5141288.

HOUSE IN CHALONG

2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, telephone, TV, UBC. Furnished with one air conditioner. Asking 8,500 baht per month. Please call for full details. Tel: 04-8484344.

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Property Gazette

FUANG FA CONDO

Fully furnished condo for rent in a quiet area, near Dao Rung School. With an air conditioner, bed, dresser, fridge, washing machine and hot water. 5 minutes from Phuket City. Only long-term rent. Asking 8,500 baht per month. Contact the owner. Tel: 04-0586086. Email: tabbychiro26@hotmail.com

9 RAI

Plot with a nice view, good for a resort, spa, etc., next to Pae Ma Nam, for long-term rent. Close to hospital, about 1.5km from Big C, Tesco-Lotus, and Central Festival. Tel: 01-8675084.

BANG TAO HOMES

New, detached, unfurnished bungalows with 2 bedrooms, large bath, hot water, surface cooking units, and a car park. Located in a lush garden area close to a waterfall. Long-term lease at 11,000-13,000 baht per month, with 2 months' deposit. Tel: 076-270377, 06-2786465, or 04-7451409.

NEW HOUSE IN RAWAI

Brand-new, furnished villa in a quiet area off Baan Sai Yuan. 3 bedrooms (1 with air conditioner), 2 bathrooms (1 ensuite), hot water, a large living area, entrance hall, kitchen, driveway & private, walled garden. Minutes from Rawai & Nai Harn beaches & close to local amenities. Looking for a careful, long-term tenant. Asking 20,000 baht per month. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-388604, 01-8943966. Email: info@thailand-sail.com

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I have many house rentals here on my island. Tel: 01-9680309. Email: info@houseinphuket.com For further details, see our website at: www.houseinphuket.com

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in Chalong. Furnished studio suites and rooftop spa pool with sea view. From 9,500 baht a month. Please contact for further details. Tel: 01-8938592, 06-2826221. Email: saneroad@yahoo.com

HOUSE FOR RENT

Soi Palai, Chalong. A 2-bedroom, furnished house, with 1 bathroom, a kitchen, a living room with air conditioning, a phone line, car park and garden. Please contact for more info. Tel: 01-5379878, 01-7971709. Email: suwittrai@hotmail.com

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needed. In order to keep our speed of sterilizing stray dogs and cats going (8,000 animals in Phuket since late 2003) for everyone, Soi Dog Foundation needs land for long-term lease or purchase in a quiet location for a professional dog shelter and veterinary clinic. Minimum of 5 rai required. Contact me Tel: 09-8959965. or John on Tel: 07-508688. Email: margot@loxinfo.co.th

HOUSE WANTED

for rent. 2 or 3 beds, phone line, cable or satellite TV, carport, garden, ADSL area, unfurnished. My budget is max 20,000 baht per month. Please contact for more information. Tel: 01-0808557. Email: info@no1visa.com

WANT TO RENT

nice home. We are a family of four who are relocating to Phuket for work. We want to rent long term but could consider to buy a nice house or condo. We are looking for privacy and a nice ambiance and view. Will not accept any overpriced property, but are ready for 40-80,000 baht per month for the right place. Please contact Tel: 60 10 69 88. Email: michaelcraon@gmail.com

SWAP PHUKET LAND

or house for BKK condo. I want to swap a modern Bangkok riverfront loft condo (area: 300sqm) on Rama 3 Rd with ocean-view land or house in Phuket with minimum value of 20 million baht. (We can pay cash for any difference in values). Tel: 05-8189429. Email: tduangpo@hotmail.com

LAND TO BUILD

a restaurant wanted: 800sqm-1,600sqm, flat, near main road, Chanote or NorSor 3 title, +/- 20m from street, +/- 60m deep, +/- 10km max from the city. Max price: 2,000 baht/sqm. Tel: 06-7741691. Email details with pictures or questions to av58phuket@yahoo.com

RENT A HOUSE

Hi, we are looking for a furnished, 2-bedroom house/apartment (for 3 or 4 people) in Phuket to rent for 3 months, from February. There must be an Internet connection. Please contact by email: kreschan@hotmail.com

Accommodation Available

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NICE APARTMENTS

in Kata. Fully furnished apartments in Kata-Karon, available also for long-term rent. Tel: 076-333242, 09-6517818. Fax: 076-333243. Email: horstkaron@yahoo.com For further details, please see our website at http://www.capt-horst.com

NICE SEAVIEW APARTMENT

Around 100 sqm. 2 bedrooms, balcony, fully equipped. Available from mid-February. 40,000-60,000 baht a month (exclusive of electricity, water and cleaning). Tel: 01-2729507. Email: g.van.hal@12move.nl Please see www.residence-phuket.com

ROOMS TO LET



Lake-view apartments in Kathu. Fully furnished with aircon, fridge, cable TV, hot water and car park. Rent 200 baht a day. Tel: 076-202585, 09-1968449. Email: ketmaneeclayton61@hotmail.com

PATONG LUXURY APARTMENTS

Central Patong 1- and 2-bedroom apartments. Email: suites247@yahoo.com

ON NANAI RD

Just available: quality 2-bed townhouse, well furnished, phone, min 6-month rental, fixed rent at 20,000 baht per month. Please call Tel: 076-342601, 01-2705374. Fax: 076-342601. Email: orcella@phuket.ksc.co.th For further details, please see our website at: www.orcella.com

Accommodation Wanted

APARTMENT

wanted for 3-4 months. I am moving to Phuket on February 10, or so, and would like to find a nice apartment in/near Patong. I plan to spend 10,000 to 20,000 baht per month and am willing to pay up-front for the right place. Required: furnished w/nice bed, TV, etc, kitchen, clean. I'll be having a Thai friend check everything out before I get there, so if you think you have a nice place, please let me know ASAP. Email: finks213@gmail.com

3 BEDROOM HOUSE

We are looking for a 3 bedroom furnished house for long term rental. Must be safe and quiet, and have fenced/walled garden, aircon, screened doors/windows, and UBC. ADSL ready preferred. Include photos w/reply if possible. We live in Phuket now. Move-in date is 15 March. Please contact for details. Tel: 09-6521799. Email: robertmichael7@hotmail.com

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42 Ft	1987	Westail 42	Euro	60,000
40 Ft	1991	Steel Sloop	US\$	90,000
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38 Ft	2003	Athens 38	US\$	225,000
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- o Guest Relations
- o Hostess
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22/1 Thepkasatri Rd, Muang, Phuket
For interview send resume to info@watermarkphuket.com
tel: 076.239078

OFFICE MANAGER

A project management company is seeking candidates for the position of Office Manager. Thai female/male with a good command of both spoken and written English, computer skills required, basic accounting knowledge, experience in real estate, good leadership and communication skills. Salary negotiable. To apply, please send your CV or contact for more information. Chrysalis Estates Co., Ltd. 20/12 Boat Lagoon Moo 2, T. Koh Kaew, A. Muang, Phuket, 83200.

Tel: 01-8912926.

Fax: 076-239724.

Email: boom@chrysalisestates.com

SALES TEAM

Thai- & English-speaking, sales experience a plus. Commission-based, a good income for the right people. Samui and Phuket based. Please call for more information. Tel: 09-9724002, 01-1700201.

SECRETARY /

Executive Administrator. We seek a female with good English, administration skills and a good personality. Salary: 15,000-22,000 baht per month. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-264442, 01-5354108. Fax: 076-264443.

JUICE INTERNET

Exciting opportunity for female to work with leading Internet café in Phuket City. Good salary. Please contact for more info. Tel: 076-223-210. Email: wayu3001@hotmail.com

SALES EXECUTIVE

Invited to apply for a challenging position in Phuket. Franke (Thailand) is a large kitchen systems manufacturer from Switzerland and was first established in Bangkok in 2002. For our Branch Office in Phuket we need a colleague to handle and expand our (projects) business. Requirements: a Thai national with a minimum of 1 year of sales experience, preferably sales of quality products to property developers; a bachelor's degree; a good command of written and spoken English; own car and an energetic personality. Franke offers a career with an attractive salary + commission for qualified candidates. Please send resume and cover letter by Email or fax. Fax: 02-236-9775. Email: FTH-info@franke.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Phuket Receptif (a travel agency in Phuket) is seeking qualified persons for the following positions: 1 PR & Marketing Secretary; and 1 Operations Office staff member. Qualifications:

1. Minimum of 2 years' experience in the hotel or travel & tour industry is an advantage;
2. Good attitude, willing to learn and work in a team;
3. Computer knowledge;
4. Good command of spoken & written English.

Salary depends on experience. Please send your CV and photo. For details, call Tel: 076-261195-6. Email: info@phuket-receptif.com

Staff Required

- 1 x Hostess

A luxury motor yacht charter company is looking for an English-speaking Thai national to fill the above position.

Hostess – Experience in hospitality and table service is essential, preferably in a five-star service establishment. Must be well presented and possess a good knowledge of the English language along with a fun personality.

Please contact
prue@tawancruises.com or phone 018 943 234 for further information.

Svenson

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An international company specializing in sales of unique and exclusive products/services has vacancies for

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Qualifications:

- 25-35 years of age, Thai nationality
- Must speak English
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- Experience with cosmetic products or other types of personal selling could be useful but is not necessary
- Selected candidates will receive high earnings and full, comprehensive training

TELESALES / RECEPTIONIST

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Qualifications:

- Thai females
- Able to speak, read and write English
- Able to use computer (MS Office program)
- Work experience in sales/telesales
- Good personality and service-minded
- Interpersonal skills and enthusiastic

Please submit application in English only, with curriculum vitae and recent photo, to:

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P.O. BOX 1057, SILOM, BANGKOK 10504

MANAGER & SECRETARY WANTED

We are looking for a Thai or foreigner to take care of staff and customers and act as a secretary. Spoken English, Thai and Spanish required. Tel: 04-8478352.

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COOKS AND WAITERS

2 cooks (a couple) with experience both in Thai and international food. Waiters with some experience and knowledge of English. Tel: 02-249-1533, 07-0888724. Email: jsmithy2005@yahoo.com

BARTENDER /

waiter wanted. New Vietnamese Restaurant requires Bartender / Waiter. Good rates. Must have good English and Vietnamese. Send your details by email plus photo if possible. Email: vnnrestaurants@yahoo.com

WRITER WANTED

For book project on human nature. Must be fluent in English and able to organize a wide range of topics in a clear manner. Contact Phil. Tel: 09-0094349. Email: phil.collier@karonproperty.com

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Hi, my name is Jan Knutsen and I'm looking for a woman who wants to be my personal assistant in Phuket. I'm an artist who is going to get my designs manufactured in Phuket and shipped to Norway where I live and work. Apply before February 10 or not at all. Email: clay@chello.no

Find more Recruitment Classifieds at
www.phuketgazette.net/

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Articles For Sale

BIG REFRIGERATOR

15 cubic feet, 2-door Mitsubishi Tiara, 6 months "new". Last week of sale: 2 couches, kitchen furniture, plants and other items. Tel: 06-5960966.

AIR CONDITIONER

Mitsubishi 12000 BTU, in very good condition. Price: 7,000 baht. Please call Tel: 07-2929967.

DIVE GEAR

Suunto, Scubapro, Problue, US Divers, AquaTech. Priced to sell. Tel: 07-8875301.

STUFF FOR SALE

including a 5hp Yamaha out-board motor. Please contact for more information. Tel: 076-284065, 01-9704638. Fax: 076-284065. Email: wanwai19@hotmail.com

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sound. 25-inch, only 1 year old, like new. 3,500 baht. Also have a surround system woofer for only 800 baht. Will sell both together for 4,000 baht. Tel: 076-283381, 09-4695937. Email: huiskens@ji-net.com

FREEZER

LG brand, 4 months old, as new with 8 month warranty. 3,200 baht or best offer. Tel: 076-283381, 09-4695937. Email: huiskens@ji-net.com

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A 6' 10" Badlandz-designed Florida surfboard. Great condition, a few minor pressure dings. Great for someone advancing to a shortboard. 14,000 baht. Please contact for details. Tel: 01-0817163 or Email: hiphopdec@gmail.com

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CANE SEATS

Two cane chairs with a glass topped cane table. Ideal for a balcony or verandah. No space so must sell. 3,000 baht, or put in an offer. Tel: 06-1200752. Fax: 01-8941530. for a photo. Email: awatea@loxinfo.co.th

RESTAURANT EQUIPMENT

Everything you need to kit out your restaurant – plates, bowls, mugs, side plates, cutlery, chafing dishes, pans, gas burners and 2 large-sized gas bottles, bar glasses + several items of office furniture, including a large corner desk. Too much to list, job lot only. 16,000 baht. First to see will buy. Tel: 04-6275728. Email: trevorfisher@hotmail.com

PIANO

15,000 baht. Phone for more details. Tel: 076-280440, 06-6831964. Email: franklee200@hotmail.com

Articles Wanted

GAMECUBE

I'm looking to buy a second-hand Nintendo Gamecube with some games. Please contact Tel: 06-662786. Email: travellingben@hotmail.com

Bulletins

Alcoholics Anonymous

is holding meetings in English at the following places:

Phuket City
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on Wed and Sun at 7 pm

Bangkok Phuket Hospital
on Fri at 7 pm

Patong
Patong Hospital
on Mon, Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun
at 7 pm and on Fri at 8 pm

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018954763 (English) or
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Business Opportunities

BUSINESS FOR SALE

Well-run visa run business including tour office at Rawai Beach. Please contact K. Jaochim. Tel: 04-8512378 for more information.

BAR FOR SALE

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Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-0820039, 01-0911662. Email: ilan_75@hotmail.com

BAR FOR SALE

Soi Bangla area, with all fittings. price: 250,000 baht. Tel: 01-8928579.

BAR FOR SALE

Patong Bar for sale includes pool table, kitchen, UBC, roadside, and terrace. Price: 450,000 baht + 150,000 baht deposit. Tel: 07-889-5736. Email: huvvywilliams@hotmail.com

GARDEN RESTAURANT

In a busy area on the main road at Surin Beach, 2 shops and a bar, fully equipped. Price: 850,000 baht. For more info. Email: swisstreff@gmx.net

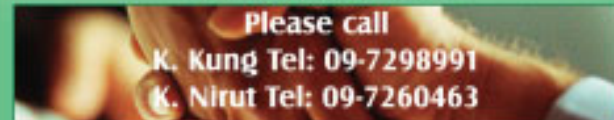
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Are you looking for high-fashion jewelry to sell overseas or a low-risk, high profit-margin opportunity to work into your own business in Thailand? Then contact us without delay, to turn your dream in to a reality. We are offering you the chance of a lifetime, to invest in a proven profitable business selling high-fashion jewelry made by some of the best designers in Thailand. Please call or email today for further information. Tel: 09-5875956. Email: pk_jewelry@hotmail.com

PATONG

guesthouse. For sale/rent. Opposite the Royal Paradise Hotel on pedestrian street, 4 stories, 20 rooms and a restaurant on the ground floor. Tel: 076-224620, 01-5360536.

GREAT BUSINESS

Opportunities. In Phuket – a prime location, in the newly constructed Simon Entertainment Plaza on busy Bangla Road in Patong. 800sqm, 2 floors, 3-year lease with 3-year renewal option. This space is very well suited for an impressive disco/nightclub. Also, 5 shophouses (ground floor only), 48sqm each, 3-year lease with 3-year renewal option. Please contact for more details. Tel: 01-8267129 or Email: infobangla_entertainment@yahoo.com

BAR AND KARAOKE

Large air-conditioned room for karaoke and outside bar for sale in Rawai. Excellent monthly turnover. 800,000 baht. Tel: 05-8094153.

NITECLUB FOR LEASE

Patong's Bangla area. 3-4 entertainment licences + dance-restaurant/cafe licence. Tel: 07-0170135.

NEW SHOP FOR SALE

in a good location for office, business and living, on Kwang Rd. 5 minutes to Phuket City & Chalong. Price: 2.1 million baht. Tel: 01-6911986. Email: budspk@hotmail.com

THAI MASSAGE AND BAR

Nice, quiet, easy money, an 8-year contract, cheap rent, beautiful inside and located in Rawai. Tel: 04-1847250. Email: fepigada@yahoo.it

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LEADERSHIP

coaching. An Australian professional Leadership & Business Coach will visit Phuket January 23-25. Leaders who utilize coaching skills have more effective teams, higher morale, and better bottom-line results than those who don't. Kool Results provides quality coaching and training to individuals and small groups, either on-site or via teleconference. Email or phone to make an appointment to discuss our services further when we visit Phuket. Please contact for more information. Tel: 61-883763492, 04-38017873. Email: info@koolresults.com.au For further details, www.koolresults.com.au

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I have one computer and a box full of computer parts – from motherboards to memory to modems (some good, some not). I would like to donate these to help some children who suffered through the tsunami. Take them away, no charge. Anyone who is involved in this work, please contact me by email. (Some proof of identity required). Tel: 076-239432, 06-2708727. Email: crob58@inbox.com

Computers

SONY VAIO 40 G

Sony mp3 music player and photo viewer with 40G HD and in-line remote control. Looking to sell for 10,000 baht o.n.o. Tel: 09-7286588. Email: psongmuang@hotmail.com

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Internationally recognized & accredited.
Address: Baan Suan Place, 38/3 Moo 5, Soi Bang Yai, Phuket.
Tel: 04-0068736 or 04-6906612.
Email: iaa@intllicense.com
www.intllicense.com

Miscellaneous Wanted

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We would be much obliged to any Anglican Minister or Celebrant who would like to attend the marriage of foreign couples at Laemontg Beach, Phi Phi islands, in early February 2006. Tel: 075-613001, 09-8681829. Fax: 075-613000.

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English. I am planning to take a course in Sweden and would like to learn basic Swedish from a Swede before going there. A local Swedish resident or tourist would be fine; you can learn Thai from me as well. If you are in Phuket and available, please let me know. We can set up a convenient time. Do not worry; we can communicate in English. Email: ratcha_2001@yahoo.com

Personals

BACKGAMMON

Retired businessman looking for backgammon players on Phuket Island. Please call. Tel: 076-386-113, 01-5778443.

DAN WILSON

Will Mr Dan Wilson of the Pacific Club at Karon Beach please contact me by email ASAP for important news? Thank you! Email: info@no1visa.com

WITNESS

An accident on the night of December 28, 2 am. By Safari, about 100m to Patong, a car hit a bike. Will be rewarded call. Tel: 06-0926021. Email: newwolves@hotmail.com

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